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MARTIN LUTHER

BY

ESTELLE ROSS

AUTHOR OF
"OLIVER CROMWELL" "THE BIRTH OF ENGLAND"
"FROM GEORGE IV TO GEORGE V" ETC.

WITH NINE ILLUSTRATIONS BY

PAUL HARDY

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CHAPTER I: *Childhood and Youth* (1483–1505)

ON the 10th of November, 1483, in a humble dwelling in the village of Eisleben, in Saxony, a son was born to Hans and Margaret Luther. This child, their first, was christened Martin, after the warrior-saint on whose eve he came into the world.

Little could his parents have dreamt what a warrior he was to be in fighting corruption in the "Church militant here on earth"! "Who foresaw this in the stars? Who could have told my career beforehand?" he questioned years after, when the Holy Roman Empire was seething with the ferment he had raised.

His parents were lowly folk, toiling for their daily bread, and he had no snobbish qualms about his ancestry. "My mother, father, and grandfather were all peasants," he said frankly. His mother was a servant before marriage, and his father, before and after, a miner.

Their first home was at Möhra, on the slope of the Thuringian Forest, but they left the village in haste, because, so it was darkly rumoured, Hans, in a violent quarrel, had killed one of his neighbours.

However this may be, their sojourn in Eisleben too was of short duration, for Martin was a baby of six months when the family moved to Mansfeld.

Though he lived there only for so short a period, the Luthers' cottage at Eisleben is still a place of pilgrimage. The change was probably brought about by Hans' growing ambition to improve his position, for Mansfeld was a bigger place. Above the valley in which the little town nestled stood grimly the domineering castle of the Counts of Mansfeld, while cowering beneath were the cottages of the poor, among which were three churches whose quaint, bulging spires gave beauty to the scene.

Hans worked hard and ever harder as Martin's brothers and sisters came on the scene, and his wife bent all her energies to the problem of feeding the boys and girls. It was a bitter struggle: poverty always knocked at the door.

Lord Rosebery in his *Pitt* truly says: "The details of the childhood of great men are apt to be petty and cloying. Hero-worship, extended to the bib and the porringer, is more likely to repel than attract." In Luther's case the details are few and sordid.

It was the custom of the time to be harsh with children, but, even so, Martin's overburdened parents carried their severity very far. The slightest disobedience was rigorously punished, and he remembered to the end of his life the thrashings he received, often for quite trivial offences. On one occasion when he had stolen a hazel-nut his

mother beat him till the blood flowed. Such was his dread of his father that, if he felt guilty of any fault, he would shrink away and hide himself in the chimney-corner. Once, after a more than usually severe castigation, he had the pluck to show resentment, and refused to speak to his sire. His own sad experience led him to maintain in later years that, while children must be disciplined, "the apple must be beside the rod. Children should not be punished for taking trifling things like cherries, apples, pears, nuts, as though they were serious matters. My parents dealt with me so severely that I was completely cowed."

They had their qualities as well as their defects, for they were an honest, independent, God-fearing couple, industrious and enduring. If the children suffered privation the parents shared it to the full. Martin's mother wore herself out in a life of toil, even bearing on her back the supply of wood for the household, and little solace came her way.

The portraits of Hans and Margaret Luther were painted by Lucas Cranach when their son had won name and fame. The careworn lines and harsh features tell the story of their strenuous lives. And Luther, grown to be a man, paid full tribute to their selfless devotion to duty. "They worked their flesh off their bones to bring us up," he said.

They were ambitious for their first-born, and

resisted the temptation to ease their cares by setting him to work as a child. They determined, however hard the struggle, to give him a good education.

The little Luthers' earliest religious lessons were given by their parents and the priests. They learnt the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Creed. Yet faith too was tempered by fear. They were not taught that "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," but rather that God was angry at man's sin, and that Christ was unapproachable, except through the intervention of the Virgin and saints. True, the saints brought gladness: their days were holidays, and the record of their marvellous deeds was as entrancing as a fairy story. Also they gave a touch of pageantry to life, for, standing at the cottage door, the children would watch the troops of pilgrims passing to sacred shrines, and processions of priests, crucifixes held aloft, followed by the devout, wending their way through the town on special festivals.

The Roman Catholic Church early trained the children in the mysteries of the faith. When quite young they went to the priest to confess their sins and receive absolution, and did small penances for their naughtiness. The actual church service was difficult for worshippers to follow, since it was in Latin. Little Martin Luther's eye would often wander to the richly coloured stained-glass

window in which Christ was depicted with a flaming sword in His hand, and to the even more attractive altar-piece, which showed the picture of a ship, manned by priests and monks, with the Pope, Cardinals, and Bishops as passengers, and the Holy Ghost directing its course. Swimming about helplessly in the sea were the unfortunate laymen, only saved from a watery grave by clinging to the ropes thrown out by the priests.

It was a superstitious age, and the child was brought up to believe in witches and evil spirits, who were said to inhabit the mountain fastnesses and to cause mighty storms, and he was even convinced that his mother was at times under a spell.

Martin was so small when he first went to school that often a bigger boy would carry him. He was quick in his studies. At six he could read and write, and arithmetic and Latin followed in due course. Yet school was no better than home so far as harshness was concerned, and the masters were brutal. One morning he was beaten no less than fifteen times for failing in a lesson, and at each successive attack his little brain became more and more bewildered. Well might he say when these dark days were over that schools were "hell and purgatory in which we were martyred by declension and conjugation, although we learnt nothing of value with all our whipping, trembling, anguish, and crying." The examination days were worst

of all, for the boys were made to feel that they were undergoing " trial for murder."

School books were few, and the principal ones were the Grammar of Donatus and *Cisio-Janus*, a tenth-century book of verse, with rimed quotations to aid the pupil to memorize the ecclesiastical calendar.

At fourteen he left Mansfeld to go to school at Magdeburg. It was the first break with his home, and he and another lad, their knapsacks on their backs, trudged off with heavy hearts, sprinkling the dust with their tears.

Hans Luther was prospering, and had hired a smelting furnace from the Count of Mansfeld, which he worked independently. In a few years he was of sufficient importance to be a member of the Town Council. He was able to pay Martin's school-fees and lodging, but there was nothing over for his board, and the boy had to fend for himself. It was no uncommon thing in those days for students left to their own resources to sing in the streets, and Martin's fine alto voice would be heard above that of his friends in misfortune, singing " *Panem propter Deum* " (" Bread, for God's sake ") outside the houses of well-to-do burghers, much as carol-singers do in our own country at Christmas-time.

There was then little indignity in this method of obtaining food, for people were accustomed to the

Luther and his Companions singing in the Streets

begging friars, journeying from place to place, preaching and living on charity.

Martin watched these friars as a lad, and one incident made so deep an impression on his mind that he recorded it in his mature manhood. He saw, passing through the streets of the town, a poor, miserably clad man, wasted to a skeleton, bearing a heavy burden on his back. He made inquiries to find out who this forlorn creature might be. He was told he was a Prince of Anhalt who had great possessions, and who, unlike the rich young man in Scripture, heard the call and forsook all to follow Christ. "This prince alone might serve as an example of the grisly, shorn holiness of the world. Whoever looked at him had to gasp for pity, and needs must be ashamed of his own worldly position."

After a year at Magdeburg Martin was removed to a school at Eisenach, the place perhaps being chosen because he would be near his mother's kinsfolk. He was by now a good-looking lad of fifteen, with strong mouth and chin and deep-set eyes. Poverty was still a problem, and once more he sang for sustenance. "I have been a beggar of crumbs and have taken my bread at the door, especially at Eisenach, my favourite town," he wrote without bitterness when these hard times were past.

Happier circumstances were in store for him at last, for one day his voice attracted the attention

of a noble lady, Frau Ursula Cotta, and she invited him to come and stay in her house. He profited greatly by this good fortune, and, under his patroness's roof, had his first insight into social manners. He worked hard and well, and prepared himself for the university. He was happy now, for, apart from his personal comfort, his schoolmaster, John Trebonius, was an honour to his calling, a courteous and considerate man. There is a touch of prophecy in his habit of walking bareheaded to his desk, as a sign of respect for the future that might be in store for some of his boys as doctors, chancellors, or magistrates.

A change came over the scene when Martin was eighteen. He was entered at the University of Erfurt. Here he made his first acquaintance with a big town, for, with its 40,000 inhabitants, it was of considerable importance, besides being the capital of Thuringia. It was a typical medieval city, with the poor and the prosperous flocking together to Mass in the fine cathedral, then some two hundred years old, or kneeling in adoration at the altar of a favourite saint and reverently lighting a candle to his honour at St Severus's or one of the other churches in the neighbourhood.

Luther lodged with other students at a boarding-house called a *burse*, and led the ordinary life of a young man of his age. The studies at the university were founded on the teaching of the ancient

Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose works Luther severely criticized when student days were done. "It is my advice that the books of Aristotle, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *The Soul*, and *Ethics*, be entirely removed from the curriculum. No one has ever understood Aristotle's meaning, and yet this study is kept up to waste time and overburden the soul. . . . There is no worse book than his *Ethics*, which goes directly contrary to God's grace and Christian virtue. . . . But I would gladly allow Aristotle's book on logic and his *Poetics* to be kept, at least in an abbreviated form."

Luther read the classics with pleasure, not so much for their style as for the picture of life which they gave. It was the human interest which appealed to him and enlarged his outlook. His favourite Latin author was Cicero. "He who wants to learn true philosophy must read Cicero: he has written more than all the Greeks, and has read all the books of the Greeks." He was to find his study of logic very useful in after years, for "it teaches one to say a thing distinctly and plainly, and in short, clear words."

Luther soon stood out as a scholar of distinction. "To pray well is to study well"; such was his motto. But he was no mere bookworm, and he enjoyed the lighter side of university life and pleasant intercourse with his fellows. He attended social gatherings, and was, when in good spirits,

as boisterous and noisy as any other undergraduate. Music was his chief recreation, so much so that he earned the name of *Musicus* for his proficiency with the lute. Many were his sayings in praise of harmony. "Music is the art of the prophets: it is the only one which, like theology, can calm the agitations of the soul, and put the devil to flight." "I have always loved music. . . . Whosoever hath skill in it is of a good kind fitted for all things." "Singers drive away sorrow by their singing," and, perhaps the most beautiful saying of all, "In the time of peace music reigns."

There was, however, another side to his nature. His dissatisfaction with the collegiate life and his fits of moody depression earned him a new nickname—that of "The Philosopher." Of the influence on his nature of these periods of despondency we shall read in another chapter.

After a year at the university he took his bachelor's degree, and two years later, in 1505, with seventeen others, was made Master of Arts. It was a happy hour when he joined the procession of successful graduates. "What majesty and splendour when masters were admitted to their degrees, with torch-light processions and all honour! No temporal, no earthly, rejoicing was ever like it. What pomp and show there was when doctors were inducted and they rode round the city in their robes and ornaments of office!"

His father was proud of his success and his dignified position, addressing him as 'you' (*ihr*) instead of the familiar 'thou' (*du*), and looked happily forward for his son, hoping not only for success in his profession but that he would make a good marriage. Alas, "the best laid schemes . . . gang aft agley"!

CHAPTER II: *Monastic Life* (1505–8)

WE have seen that Luther suffered from occasional attacks of despondency, but beyond this we know nothing of his inner, his spiritual, life at the time. Events were to prove that he had been thinking deeply and meditating on the relationship between man and his Maker. Should one, like the Prince of Anhalt, become a beggar in order to serve his Master? Should the creature worship the Creator in the seclusion of the monastic cell, or should he follow a worldly career?

Thoughts such as these must have been in his mind as he tramped off one day to visit his parents at Mansfeld. He trudged along under the darkling sky, and heavy drops of rain laid the dust at his feet. Suddenly a storm of intense violence broke upon the land. Was he alone in his terror as the thunder crashed overhead and the lightning flashed across his path? Tradition tells us—but historians throw a doubt on the suggestion—that he was accompanied by a friend, and that the lightning, followed by a terrific thunderclap, struck the man dead at his feet.

One thing is certain, that it was when the storm was at its height, and Luther himself in danger, that he prayed with great intensity to St Anne, the mother of the Virgin, the patron saint of the miners,

whom he had been taught to revere as a child—prayed for his life. "Help me, St Anne, and I will become a monk."

Years afterward, in 1521, when dedicating his book on monastic vows to his father, he wrote, " I was called to this vocation by the terrors of Heaven, for neither willingly nor by my own desire did I become a monk, but surrounded by the terror and agony of a sudden death I vowed a forced and irrevocable vow."

Sudden resolves are often the result of long inward conflict, but when the danger is past it is not always easy to fulfil the promise to Heaven. Luther never hesitated: from that moment he was pledged.

On reaching home safely he informed his mother and father of his decision, and it met with instant disapproval. And yet in later years he held their harsh upbringing to be responsible for this decision, which he afterward considered the greatest mistake. " The sad, austere life with my parents when young was really the cause of my fleeing to the cloister." Little had they thought that the seeds of sorrow they sowed in their boy's heart would yield such a harvest.

His sire, who had little liking for the clergy, and less for the monks, was furious. Was it for this that he had educated his clever son, now a grown man?

Luther, having made his promise, hastened to

redeem it. It took but a fortnight to settle up his worldly affairs and dispose of his few possessions.

On the eve of his departure he invited his friends to a party, and was in a merry mood. His beautiful voice was heard, as many thought, for the last time in secular song, and when the pleasant evening drew to its close his comrades reluctantly bade him a long farewell. Two of his most intimate friends, however, stayed the night, and accompanied him next morning to the monastery gate. His simple wallet contained but two books—the works of Plautus, the Roman comic dramatist, and of Virgil, the great Roman poet.

Waving good-bye to his companions, he knocked at the gate of the convent of the Brothers of the German Congregation of the Order of Hermits, a monkish order, instituted in the twelfth century, whose rule was partly founded on the writings of the great Father of the Church St Augustine, who flourished in the fourth.

Monastic orders are careful in selecting their recruits. They know well that few are called, but fewer chosen, to lead a life of discipline and restraint. It was with the customary form that the Prior accepted him in the convent chapel. " We receive you on probation for one year, and may God, Who hath begun a good work in you, carry it on to perfection."

The kneeling brethren chanted " Amen ! " The

novice was then clothed in the garment of the Order —a white tunic, mantle, and hood, with a strip of serge, like a sleeveless, open pinafore, known as a scapular. Thus robed, he knelt on the altar steps during the singing of the monks and the prayer of the Prior that God, "Who hath converted this young man from the world, and prepared him for a mansion in Heaven, grant that his daily walk may be as becometh his calling, and that he may have cause to be thankful for this day's work."

The year's novitiate began with a month of complete seclusion, so that Luther might be quite sure whether the spirit that moved him was of God. He was put under the charge of an older monk, who was to instruct him in his calling, and he was taught even such minor details as how to fold his hands, how to eat and drink in the presence of his superiors, and how to speak to women. When this period of probation was over he saw more of the life of the community.

At first the weekly confession must have been a great ordeal to his proud spirit, for the monks had not only publicly to confess the sins which they had committed, but to make careful reports and notify the lapses of their brethren, and even the most saintly among them may have had small private grievances which enabled them to magnify the mote in their brother's eye. After confession came penance, inflicted by the Prior. For trifling

offences, such as falling asleep in chapel, the repetition of a psalm would suffice, but for graver sins fasting, fetters, and the rod were ordained. Heavy tasks were set to try Luther's spirit, and, far from his academic degree winning him any special consideration, he was treated with extra severity in order to test his zeal and break his pride. Servant's drudgery was his portion. He swept the church, tramped the town with a sack on his back, begging for alms, and performed the menial offices of the community.

With all this work he had also to attend the seven daily services at the canonical hours—*Matins* after midnight, *Lauds* at daybreak, *Prime* at six o'clock, *Tierce* at nine o'clock, *Sext* at noon, *Nones* at three o'clock, *Vespers* at five o'clock, *Compline* before bedtime. Thus many hours daily were spent in prayer, in the course of which five and twenty times the Lord's Prayer—the *Paternoster* it was called, from the first words in the Latin—and the *Ave Maria*—"Hail, Mary"—were recited.

Thus he lived a life of action and a life of contemplation, and so far he was convinced that here was his abiding place. The Prior too, with his wide experience of novices, was convinced, for, at the end of the year, Martin Luther was received into the Order. On the threshold of manhood he took his final vows.

What does it mean to become a monk? At its

highest and best—and it was only with the purest motives that Luther entered the cloister—it means renunciation. What we live and fight for in the outer world—wealth and social position, personal loves of wife, of child, of parents, and of friends—all are as dust in the balance to these servants of God, with Whom they have elected to live in constant communion, to serve in work and praise and prayer.

As Martin Luther stood in the convent chapel to make his fateful decision the Prior turned to him, and bade him think but a moment more. After a year's experience of the rigours of monastic life he must make his choice—the cloister or the world.

Without hesitation his clear voice rang out, "I, Brother Martin, do make profession and promise of obedience unto Almighty God, unto Mary, always a Virgin, and unto thee, my brother, the Prior of this cloister, to live in poverty and chastity under the rule of St Augustine until death." A burning taper, symbol of the flame of the soul, was placed in his hands, and he received the kiss of brotherhood. The bell tolled for this renunciation as it tolls for the dead.

Luther had now a simply furnished cell, with a table and chair, a bed and a lamp. His duties were now less humble. No monk was more anxious to fulfil the obligations of his order. "If Augustine went straight to Heaven," he afterward wrote, "from the walls of an Abbey, I too ought to have

done so. All my brethren would give me this testimony. I fasted, I watched, I mortified myself, I practised all the monastic severities till I made myself absolutely ill."

And yet, with all this austerity, Luther, as we shall see later on, had missed his vocation. He, who had hitherto lived in the company of his fellows, and had enjoyed the pleasures of social intercourse, now that the drudgery was relaxed, became a prey to his own thoughts, and, with a rare modesty, obsessed with the idea of his own wickedness. He wrote to his confessor, Staupitz, " Oh my sins ! My sins ! " The wise man brought comfort to his tormented mind by bidding him remember the words, " I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Still the young monk, though momentarily relieved, was deeply depressed.

" Why are you so sad, Brother Martin ? " asked Staupitz once, visiting him in his cell. " Are you not aware that temptation of the kind is good and necessary for you ? "

In order to rid himself of this burden of guilt he increased his mortifications. For days together he would hardly touch food, and he became worn and ill. One day when his cell door was opened he was found in a dead faint on the floor, and was restored to consciousness only by the strains of music floating into his chamber.

CHAPTER III: *The Journey to Rome* (1508–11)

STAUPITZ, in his wisdom, saw that some change was needed in the young monk's life, and an opportunity came which was to shape all his subsequent career, and in doing so to shake the Catholic Church to its foundations.

Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, had founded a university at Wittenberg in 1502, in the hope that it might rival the famous one at Leipzig. Charters for universities were usually granted by the Pope, but in this case it was the Emperor Maximilian who provided " for the happy progress of knowledge, good arts, and liberal studies, that they, drawn from the fountain of divine wisdom, may make our subjects more apt to the administration of the common weal, to foresight in the provision of things necessary to life."

Staupitz was asked to send seven learned monks as teachers, and among those chosen was Brother Martin, who went off in such a hurry that he had not time to say good-bye to his friends. He was to live in the monastery at Wittenberg, and to devote part of his time to study.

This little town, the ancient capital of Saxony, had small outward attraction, either in itself or in its inhabitants, who had the unfortunate reputation of being rude, boisterous, and the most drunken

in Germany. These hapless and neglected peasants, some three thousand in number, lived in the wretched, straw-thatched wooden cottages which dotted the banks of the Elbe, the river on which the town stood.

They had small encouragement to beautify their dwellings, for they were in constant danger of losing their homes when the river was in flood. Wittenberg was redeemed from squalor by the Elector's palace, which dominated the country round, two fine churches, and the monastic and university buildings.

Brother Martin was appointed to lecture on Aristotle, already an uncongenial subject, though he had not yet 'scrapped' his works as being of little educational value. Even if he had misgivings, he had vowed obedience and accepted his post. In his experience with his classes he was gradually to realize his powers as a speaker and his magnetism as a man.

After two years' residence he had the privilege of being chosen to accompany an older monk of more experience on an embassy to Rome, to lay a petition on behalf of the Augustinian Order before Pope Julius II. The penniless pilgrims, for they were only provided with ten gulden with which to pay for an advocate at the Papal Court, set forth on the long journey on foot. They walked, one behind the other, murmuring prayers as they went,

and relying on the hospitality of the Augustinian monasteries for their board and lodging.

It was a great experience for the peasant's son, who had never before left his own country; and it was full of interest for him, especially when once Swabia and Bavaria had been crossed and his eyes rested on the glorious Alps, gleaming whitely above him and beckoning him on.

What a change of scene burst on his view as he crossed the mountain pass and trod the fruitful plains of Lombardy, with their olive groves, their vineyards, their rich abundance of the fruits of the earth! How refreshing it was to the tired travellers, as they plodded on, to enjoy the luscious sweetness of the purple grapes and the light Italian wine!

Their first important halt was at Milan, and here art, not nature, was to astound them. Nothing comparable to the noble cathedral, though it was as yet unfinished, had met their gaze. The marble building, gleaming in the brilliant sunshine, canopied by the deep blue of the Italian sky, seemed a house not made with hands.

They turned from it to seek the monastery where they were to stay, and here too a marble dwelling awaited them.

If the exterior seemed too grand to the simple monks the interior was even less to their liking. Brother Martin was troubled at the abundance of

food spread on the refectory table, especially as, even on Friday, the day of abstinence, dishes of meat appeared on the board. So shocked was he, indeed, that, forgetting he was but a passing guest with no authority, in his blunt German way he freely criticized the self-indulgence of the Italians, and probably they did not like him any the better for that.

On leaving Milan he reverted to his own fare, and, what with the meagre diet and the weariness of walking in the intense heat, he broke down, and had to rest for a while.

Refreshed and with renewed strength, the monks pressed on to Florence, the city of flowers, as it is called from the beauty of the blossoms in its fields and gardens, sheltered by the purple Apennines. Florence was at that time the centre of the Renaissance, and it had attained unparalleled heights under the sway of the Medicis.

Here, less than a score of years earlier, a Dominican monk of the Convent of San Marco, Savonarola, had electrified the townsfolk by the fiery eloquence of his sermons against the sins of the people, the luxury of the great, and the corruption of the Church. And he had prophesied too that calamities would befall the city. Reformers and visionaries are rarely popular for long, especially when the repentance they inspire is short-lived and their dreams come true. He was no exception. The

Pope was appealed to, and Savonarola was excommunicated, imprisoned, and finally hung, and his body reduced to ashes.

Brother Martin, as he paced the broad square of the Piazza Signoria, must have heard the story of his indomitable pluck in the last dread hour when he was ' unfrocked ' on the scaffold. The Bishop, taking from him his monastic robe, pronounced the sentence, " I separate thee from the Church militant and triumphant."

" Militant," replied Savonarola, " but not triumphant, that rests not with you."

The Dominican monk has been called " the herald of the Reformation," but the essential difference between him and the Augustinian lies in those brave words. Savonarola never forsook the Church, though it rejected him ; Luther was to renounce all allegiance.

Little did he think as he stood on the very spot of Savonarola's martyrdom what was to come to himself. There were other things occupying his mind. A moment later he would lift his eyes to the noble Duomo, Santa Maria del Fiore, with its campanile towering toward the sky. Then he would visit St Croce, the resting-place of the illustrious dead, San Lorenzo, unfinished to this day, where Savonarola's oratory had been poured forth.

The greatest impression was made on his mind by the hospitals. That of Bonifacio had been

founded in 1376, and that of St Giovanni de Dio a quarter of a century later. The Florentines were pioneers in the humane treatment of the sick, and Luther studied all the details with care. "Here," he tells us, "the patients were supplied with the best food and drink, and tended by diligent servants and skilful physicians. The painted bedsteads were covered with clean linen. When a patient is brought in his clothes are taken off and given to a notary to keep honestly. Then they put a white bedgown on him and lay him between the clean sheets, and two physicians are brought at once. Servants fetch food and drink in clean glass vessels, and do not touch the food even with a finger, but offer it to the sufferer on a tray. Honourable matrons, veiled, serve the poor all day long, without making their names known, and at evening return home."

Leaving Florence, they pressed on to Rome, and in about five months the goal of their journey was reached. From the heights of Monte Maria Brother Martin gazed on the City of the Seven Hills with wonder and awe. Here, in the Vatican, lived the Viceregent of God on earth, the representative of St Peter, his Holiness the Pope. "Hail, Holy City," the monk cried in ecstasy. "Thrice holy art thou, in whom the blood of the martyrs has been poured out!"

In silence the monks passed through the Fla-

minian gate of the city, and made their way to the Augustinian convent near by.

The Rome of that day was in process of reconstruction under the guidance of Pope Julius II, whose passion was for art and architecture. He was fortunate in his time, for the great Michelangelo decorated the Sistine Chapel, and Bramante, the celebrated architect, was preparing the designs for St Peter's as it now stands.

Luther must have been astonished at the gossip he heard about the Holy Father, who preferred to do battle against earthly opponents rather than against spiritual ones.

To this visit to Rome Luther afterward attributed the beginning of his disillusionment. Where he had expected to find the spirit of pure holiness he found cynicism and worldliness. He assisted at Masses in the churches, or tried to, but the Italian priests, racing through the service, had reached the end before he had well begun. He heard them mock at it even, and say, as they stood at the altar to consecrate the wafer, which they were taught to believe would thus, in some mystical way, be changed into the actual body of Christ, "Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt remain!"

Then too he was told of a wealthy priest who had recently died, leaving a large fortune and, on a parchment scroll, his advice to those who were to

succeed him, " I extorted and oppressed as long as I was able : while you have power get what you can."

But the disillusionment was gradual, and Brother Martin still went from church to church, and craved the blessings that rewarded the faithful who prayed at sacred shrines, so much so that he even wished that his mother and father were dead, so that by these prayers he could save their souls from Purgatory. On his knees he climbed the stairs of the Chapel of Scala Santa at the Lateran —those stairs which are said to have been brought from Pilate's Judgment Hall at Jerusalem—and on each step he murmured the appointed words that reduced his stay in Purgatory by nine years at a time. As he fulfilled this penance there flashed through his mind the words, " The just shall live by faith," which were to be a key-note of his theology.

Rome was a brilliant city. The wealthy Cardinals drove about in gilded chariots, with magnificent umbrellas of peacocks' feathers held over their ecclesiastical heads. Stately processions in gorgeous robes accompanied the Holy Father on his progresses.

Luther saw with interest, if without enthusiasm, the ruins of ancient Rome—the Colosseum and the Pantheon. He was ever insensitive to beauty in art and architecture.

The visit to the Eternal City was a revelation to him of a world he had never dreamed of in his philosophy. "I would not have missed seeing Rome for a hundred thousand florins. I should ever have been uneasy lest I might have done injustice to the Pope."

He returned to Wittenberg a sadder and a wiser monk, but a devout Catholic still.

CHAPTER IV: *The Ninety-five Theses* (1511–17)

DURING his absence a new Prior had been appointed at Wittenberg, and Luther had the happiness of having as his superior an old friend and former schoolfellow, Wenceslaus Link. During the next two years he was principally occupied with his lectures at the university, and then promotion came his way, and he was made Sub-prior. Staupitz now wished him to become a Doctor of Theology, and together they discussed the matter, sitting under a pear-tree in the monastery garden. Luther pleaded to be excused. The new degree, he argued, meant increased work and less time for study. Staupitz waived aside the objection.

"Upon a Doctor," Luther replied, "it is incumbent, according to his oath of office, to explain the Scriptures to all the world and to teach every one."

Staupitz agreed, and it was for this very reason that he was inexorable. The Sub-prior could not but obey.

The Elector Frederick provided the necessary funds, and the degree was conferred on Luther by Dr Carlstadt, whose office it was to present him with hat and ring, the emblems of his honourable position.

It was a festive occasion, and old comrades from

Erfurt were invited to join in the rejoicings. He made many new friends as a result of his promotion. It will suffice to mention one—his fellow-theologian Spalatin, who was chaplain to the Elector Frederick, and was to play a great part in Luther's subsequent life.

In addition to his other duties, Luther now preached at the parish church, sometimes as often as four times a day. He was a student still, and he remained one, as all thinkers must, to the end of his life. He read and re-read the works of John Tauler, the mystic, and St Augustine, and found much therein that appealed both to the mystical and the practical side of his religious nature. Above all he studied the Bible, bringing his fresh and vigorous mind to bear on its interpretation, and, in order to get at the original sources, he learned Hebrew. To the theologians the interest of the notes he made lies in the gradual development of his doctrine; to others they emphasize the sincerity of his work.

He bade his students, before opening the Bible, to pray to God, then read the appointed lesson simply through as a story, and afterward read it as the study of Christ. His first sermons were on the Psalms, always one of his favourite books. Then came a series on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, through which he learnt as much himself as he taught his pupils, for he was akin in spirit

to the great apostle whose assertion, " A man is justified by faith," he considered the corner-stone of his teaching, as it subsequently became of his own.

As late as the nineteenth century Coleridge wrote of Luther as " the only fit commentator on Paul, not by any means such a gentleman as the Apostle, but almost as great a genius."

Luther's lectures were a revelation to many of his hearers. It seemed, as Philip Melanchthon, afterward his friend and colleague, said, " that the light of a new learning had arisen after a long dark night. . . . All devout people were much taken with the sweetness of the doctrine, and it was welcome to the learned, as though Christ had appeared out of gloom, prison and decay."

In May 1515 Luther was appointed Vicar, and had eleven monasteries under his charge, to which he had to pay frequent visits to counsel and reprove erring monks, and to give his attention to domestic details of the management and welfare of the community. He was fully qualified for this task, which entailed a large correspondence on many matters. In one letter he wrote tenderly to a sinful and repentant monk, " Peter fell that he might know himself to be a man : to-day the cedars of Lebanon which touch the heavens with their heads are falling. Even an angel—a wonder surpassing all wonders—fell in Heaven, and Adam in Paradise." To a

Prior who complained of the difficulties of his post he wrote a letter of good counsel, bidding him remember that he who with readiness embraces the cross, in everything that he thinks, feels, and understands, will in time find the fruit of his suffering to be sweet peace.

In the following year Luther gave a further series of lectures—on the Epistle to the Galatians. Though he did not fully realize it then, he was gradually adopting an independent line of thought, which the Church discouraged in its priests. The Pope and the Councils settled all matters of doctrine, and unswerving adherence to their judgment was expected.

Since Luther's visit to Rome Julius II had died and Leo X had succeeded him on the papal throne. He shared his predecessor's ambition to make St Peter's the greatest church in Christendom, but he was without sufficient money to carry on the work. How should it be obtained?

He resorted to a method often used by former Popes, and proceeded to arrange for the sale of indulgences throughout Germany. Half of the proceeds were to go to St Peter's, and half to Albert, Archbishop of Mainz, the Primate of Germany. At the age of twenty-four the Archbishop had obtained his great office by pure and unblushing bribery. In order to secure the pallium, a vestment of white wool, embroidered with red crosses, which

was the symbol of his dignity, he borrowed from the Fuggers of Augsburg (wealthy bankers of those days, with a position like that which the Rothschilds hold to-day) the sum of 14,000 ducats. As he had now to repay them, he was keen on this new venture. He chose John Tetzel, a Dominican monk, already experienced as an auctioneer of indulgences, as his salesman, and the Fuggers, with their business instinct, arranged that an agent of theirs should be present, to see that they were paid their share.

What were these wares which Tetzel had to sell? The Catholic Church believed that the superfluous good deeds of the saints, who were so holy as to have virtue to spare for others, and the inexhaustible merits of Christ formed a Treasury of Merit. This Treasury was a sort of spiritual savings' bank, and the Pope had power to make drafts on it for the benefit of those who had sinned and were sorry and wished to escape the consequences of their lapses from grace.

A Catholic is compelled to confess regularly to the priest, who, after sentencing him to various penances as a proof of contrition, gives him absolution. Eternal punishment is thus averted, but the temporary punishment which the sinner will have to suffer either in this world or in Purgatory remains to be faced. Though many people enjoy wrongdoing, none enjoy the unpleasant conse-

quences, and the theory of indulgences was framed to meet this human need. An indulgence, which could be bought for a certain sum, varying according to circumstances, enabled the Pope to withdraw from the Treasury of Merit a draft of goodness which would save a sinner either partly or entirely from the penalty for his ill-doing.

Catholics had faced the difficulty that the average man and woman, when they die, are neither good enough for Heaven nor bad enough for Hell. Other Christian sects offer only these two alternatives. Catholics believe that there is another resting-place beyond the grave called Purgatory, where erring souls are purified for a certain number of years in order to make them fit for Heaven. These imprisoned spirits were not cut off entirely from intercourse with friends on earth. The petitions of the living could reach them, and help them; and " of your charity " you were asked to pray for their souls.

Tetzel's first intimation that all might not go well with his mission was when the Elector of Saxony refused to let him enter his dominions, on the grounds that he did not want his subjects to be fleeced. This was an exception, for as a rule he was welcome wherever he went. It was a great day for the little towns in other parts of Germany when it became known that he was to pay them a visit. Priests and monks bearing candles and

banners streamed out of the gates, to meet him as he rode in in his chariot. Before him on a cloth of gold was carried the Bull announcing the indulgence. Crowds flocked to greet and join the procession as it slowly wended its way through flag-bedecked streets to the principal church, where, over the brightly lit altar with its red cross, hung the yellow papal flag, embroidered with the crossed keys of St Peter. Red-robed acolytes walked among the throng that crowded the building, chanting as they went, " Buy, buy," and men and women passed up to the foot of the altar, where a great iron dish was held to receive their money.

The murmuring of many voices was silenced as Tetzel entered the pulpit. Standing, or sitting down on the few seats, the crowd listened spell-bound as in lurid colours he painted the terrors of Hell, the long-drawn anguish of Purgatory. Then, changing his note from one of gloom to one of triumph, he would reveal to his hearers the joys that awaited them when they were at last worthy to pass through the gem-studded gates into the City of Pure Gold, and live a life of unending joy in the many mansions of the blest.

With his unerring instinct for what would go straight to the heart of each listener, he described sins of thought and deed, passing from tiny misdemeanours to outrageous crimes, and as he spoke there was no one who did not feel his heart beat

faster, and fear grip him. People grew terrified for their immortal souls. To part with their money meant short commons for weeks, but what of that ? The Present was nothing when Eternity was at stake.

When they were sufficiently alarmed as to their own miserable condition, so that the smallest fault was magnified in their excited imaginations to a terrible crime, Tetzel turned their attention to the sufferings of their dear ones in Purgatory, and he did not spare them a pang. How simple the remedy ! Directly the right sum of money clinked in the plate the beloved souls would be wafted from Purgatory to Paradise, and in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, God would " wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Our English poet William Langland, more than a century before, had painted such a man as Tetzel :

> Look there, a Pardoner, preaching like a priest,
> A papal bull he brought, sealed by the bishop,
> He can assoil them all, of fasting, falsehood, and of broken vows,
> The simple fools believed him, loved his words,
> Came and knelt and kissed his bull.

Now, Luther heard of the coming of Tetzel, and was horrified at the monstrous mockery that he now considered the sale to be. " What should be regarded with all reverence had become a horrid means of pampering avarice, since it is not the

salvation of souls but solely the pecuniary profit that is in view. The people are taught not concerning the forgiveness of sins, but only concerning the remission of penances, as though when these are paid the soul immediately flies to Heaven."

He preached thus from the pulpit, but he did more than that. He decided to thrash the matter out in a disputation, a method employed in medieval universities to obtain opinions on a subject of interest.

The custom was to fix the theme of a proposed discussion on the door of a church, and so Luther, having worked out his famous Ninety-five Theses against the theory of indulgences, at noon on October 31, 1517, nailed it on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg.

That church was a place of great sanctity to Catholics, for it contained many sacred relics, which they were encouraged to venerate. They had largely been brought together by the Elector, who, though in many respects a man in advance of his age, was, in such matters, but a child of the period. Here were such objects of reverence as a thorn from the crown of Calvary, a tress of the Virgin's hair, parings of St Peter's nails, and, the oldest relic of all, a piece of the burning bush seen by Moses.

Luther, in the document at which passers glanced (it was too long to read through all at once), set forth his main line of thought in the opening.

Luther nailing up his Theses

"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says 'Repent' he means that the entire life of believers should be a repentance." If, he argues, the Pope can rescue souls from Purgatory why does he not do so from love, instead of requiring money for the service? Alternatively, if money be indeed necessary why does not he himself pay it out of the Papal treasury? Christ's merits belong to all Christians alike, and the true treasury of the Church is in the Holy Gospel, and the grace and glory of God.

Among other things, he asserted that Christians should be taught that, unless they have means beyond their necessities, they should keep the money for their families, and also that, when the Pope grants indulgences, he does not so much seek for their money as for earnest prayers on his behalf. The Pope, he felt sure, if he really knew the exactions of the indulgence-mongers, would rather that St Peter's were reduced to ashes than rebuilt by such means.

In the afternoon of that same fateful day—for it has been regarded as the birthday of the Reformation—he preached in the church on the subject, explaining more fully his meaning. To many of his hearers he was but uttering boldly what they had felt in their secret hearts, and he was listened to by an eager congregation.

Although he could not foresee that his action was

ultimately to split the Christian Church in two, he yet sufficiently realized the boldness of his proposition, for he wrote to tell Archbishop Albert of Mainz of what he had done.

> Venerable Father in God, most illustrious prince, vouchsafe to cast a favourable eye on me who am but dust and ashes, and to receive my request with pastoral kindness. There is circulated throughout the country in the name of your grace and lordship the Papal indulgence for the erection of St Peter's at Rome. I do not so much object to the declarations of the preachers of the indulgence as to the erroneous idea entertained of them by the poor, simple, and unlearned, who are everywhere openly avowing their fond imaginations on the subject. This pains me and turns me sick.

There were no newspapers in those days to spread the tidings, but there was the printing press. Copies of the Theses were printed, and in less than a month they were circulated throughout Christendom "as though angels were the postmen." The Saxon monk had expressed the thought that was in many minds with vigour and conviction. Among those that sent him encouraging messages was the great painter Albert Dürer, who accompanied his letter with a present of a set of engravings.

Luther had aimed his shaft at the Papacy, and hit it in a vulnerable place, but neither he nor Leo X yet discerned how deep was the wound.

CHAPTER V: *The First Trial* (1517–19)

THE university was amazed and alarmed. Not so Luther, who never flinched; "for," he said, "if the work be of God, who shall prevent it—if it be of man, who shall promote it?"

The Pope thought little of the matter at first, considering it a mere dispute between the Dominican and Augustinian monks. He spoke contemptuously of the Theses as the work of a drunken German who would hold different opinions when he was sober.

Luther, at the outset, showed all due deference to the Holy Father, and wrote him a letter almost abject in its submissiveness. "I cast myself," he said, "at your feet with the offer of myself and all that is in me. Pronounce the sentence of death or life, call, recall, approve, disapprove, I acknowledge your voice to be the spirit of Christ Who reigns and speaks in you. If I have deserved death I shall not flinch from dying."

In order to make his point of view clearer he wrote a book, *Resolutions*, in which he asserted that in attacking indulgences he was not attacking the Church or the Pope—a statement which was not literally true, for he asserted that the Pope was a man like other men, which challenged his supreme position as the mouthpiece of God. And,

having attacked the Holy Father's merits, he cast his eye on the hierarchy of saints. Since no one ever entirely fulfilled the commands of God, they could have no superfluous credit with which to assist their erring brethren. The holy living did not come off much better than the holy dead, but this was due to the indifference of the Church. "Rome now laughs at good men: in what part of the Christian world do men more freely make a mock of the best bishops than in Rome, that true Babylon?" This note of criticism was to swell louder and louder the longer he considered his subject.

The Pope could no longer ignore that "drunken German," and he took action in February 1518, bidding the Provincial-General of the Augustinian Order deal with him at once. The first step was to write an attack on the Theses which asserted that the Pope cannot err when he speaks as the representative of St Peter, either concerning faith or morals.

Luther had boldly opposed this dogma. What of the terrible crimes committed by some of the occupiers of the Papal throne? What of the iniquities of Boniface VII and Julius II, to give examples?

The Holy Father had had enough by now of the recalcitrant Doctor of Theology, and he summoned him to appear at Rome within sixty days to stand his trial as a heretic.

Luther felt sure he would meet with little justice in the Holy City, and wrote urgently to Spalatin, begging him to intercede with the Pope that the trial should take place in Germany. "I do not see in what way I can escape the verdict intended against me except by the aid of the prince. . . . To Rome—why, the Pope himself would not be in safety there. They have paper and ink enough and scribes without number, and can easily write word in what I have erred."

The Elector Frederick's intervention prevailed, and the "son of iniquity," as Luther was dubbed, was summoned to take his trial before Cardinal Cajetan at the free city of Augsburg. He fully understood the seriousness of his position, and a fit of despondency fell upon him when he thought of what the future might have in store. Imprisonment, or even death, might be his fate, and his thoughts turned to his old home with sympathy for his parents' sufferings. "If I must die what a scandal I shall be to my dear mother and father!"

It was with a heavy heart that he set out with a companion on the long and weary tramp—all the more trying as the weather was cold and wet. They halted at Weimar, where Luther preached in the church, and gladly accepted the sum of twenty gulden which Spalatin gave him toward his expenses. The next halting-place was at Nuremberg, and here he had the happiness to be

joined by his friend Wenceslaus Link, who accompanied him on the journey and cheered him in his troubles. His health was breaking down under the physical and mental strain, and he became so ill that it was impossible for him to continue the journey on foot, and a conveyance had to be obtained, so that he could reach his destination in time.

He entered Augsburg on October 7, and went straight to the Carmelite convent, where he was to stay during the trial. He had a few days' rest before the ordeal, for he refused to appear at all until the Emperor had given him a safe-conduct which would prevent his being arrested.

In the interval a friend of Cajetan's, one Urbanus, was sent to interview Brother Martin, and try to persuade him to retract.

"Pronounce but the one word *Revoco*," he urged, "and all will be well."

Luther grimly refused, and Urbanus tried to frighten him into acquiescence.

"Do you think your sovereign will go to war for your sake?" he asked.

"God forbid!"

"Where then is your refuge?"

"In Heaven."

On October 12 the first meeting with Cardinal Cajetan took place. The Augustinian monk showed all outward humility and reverence to the Pope's

representative, and abased himself on the ground before him. The Cardinal, thinking this was a sign of grace, bade him rise, addressed him as "little brother," complimented him on his learning, and then went on to charge him with his errors. The two specified were:

1. You have contradicted a decision of Pope Clement VI with regard to the Treasury of Merit, and denied that the Merits of Christ are the treasures of the Church, distributed among the faithful by means of indulgences.
2. You have asserted that it is necessary to have faith in the Sacraments in order to receive the benefit of them.

"I have preached no new doctrine," Luther replied. "It is to be found in the Bible, in the writing of the Fathers and the Canons."

Cajetan interrupted abruptly, "The Pope lays it down that the merits of Christ are the treasure of indulgences. Do you believe it or not?"

The duel between them went on. Cajetan's weapon was the authority of the Pope, Luther's the authority of the Bible. So the first day's proceedings came to an end.

The trial began again on the following day with much the same arguments on both sides. "I am not conscious," Luther declared, "of having said anything that is contrary to Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, or the decretals of the

Pope. Why not," he urged, " submit the whole dispute to the judgment of the University of Paris ? "

The Cardinal, who was there to convince and reprove a heretic, waved the suggestion aside.

Another two days were equally barren of results, and Luther wrote, " The legate hath treated with me, or rather against me, for the space of four days, having promised our illustrious Prince that he would act a kind and fatherly part." This promise, he continued, had not been fulfilled, " for the Cardinal was not open to argument, either public or private, and simply urged, ' Recant, acknowledge your error, obey the will of the Pope.' " Cajetan tried to influence Luther through his friends Staupitz and Link, but in vain.

Meantime he was a celebrity, and well he knew it, as we may see from a letter he wrote to Melanchthon. " There is no news here, except that the town is full of talk about me, and everybody wants to see the man who, like a second Herostratus, has kindled such a flame." Again, " Remain a man, . . . and instruct the youth aright. I go to be sacrificed for them and for you, if God so will. For I will rather die, and what is the hardest fate, lose for ever all sweet intercourse with you, than revoke anything that it was right for me to say."

Cajetan had to give way sufficiently to allow Luther to set down his reasons in writing, but this

was of no real use. When the paper was handed to the Cardinal he treated it with contempt. Ten times Luther tried to have his say, and was ten times interrupted by the insistent word, *Revoco*. "Go," bade the Cardinal at last, "and return not till thou art willing to recant." He had met his match, and, though perhaps, like an Englishman, he did not know when he was beaten, he declared, "I will dispute no more with this beast; it has deep eyes and marvellous thoughts in its head."

Luther apparently still thought some compromise was possible, and wrote to the Cardinal offering to speak no more on indulgences if he, and the Church which he fought for, would also be silent. He received no reply.

His business in Augsburg concluded, he had to return to Wittenberg. But how could he return? The Emperor's safe-conduct might or might not save him from molestation, for now he was a marked man. Secretly and at dead of night, dressed in ordinary clothes—for Staupitz, knowing the danger, had permitted him to discard the monk's robes—he left Augsburg.

Cajetan was not content to accept a truce, and wrote to the Elector Frederick to ask for Luther's arrest. Frederick, however, though anxious not to offend the Pope, wrote firmly but courteously that he was not convinced that Luther was a heretic.

Thus the first encounter was inconclusive, and

the Pope was sufficiently acute to see that bullying would only harden his opponent's heart.

The second man chosen to deal with the obstinate monk was of a different temperament, a diplomatist and man of the world—Charles von Miltitz, agent to the Saxon courts and Papal Chamberlain. The Pope had awarded Frederick the cherished honour of the Golden Rose, and Miltitz was to confer it on him. He was also primed with the suggestion that if Luther would give way he should have preferment in the Church, and a bishopric or some other high office would be found for him in the future.

Before Miltitz met Luther he had a heated interview with Tetzel, then sheltering in a monastery in Leipzig, told him that he was an unscrupulous rogue, and rated him soundly for the trouble he had brought about. Tetzel was made the scapegoat, and, though only partially responsible, he felt the charge so keenly that it broke him. Six months later he was dying. Luther sent him a compassionate letter. "Do not trouble yourself," he wrote, "for it was not you that began this affair; the child has quite another father."

The Papal Chamberlain had not been long in Germany before he was aware how far the new doctrines had spread. He saw that it was no longer a personal quarrel but a national conflict, and that he must be very judicious.

The conference between Miltitz and Luther took

place at Spalatin's house at Altenburg in January 1519. Miltitz began in a conciliatory tone, complimenting Luther on his youth and vigour. He had expected to find an aged theologian, rubbing his old hands by the stove. The skilled diplomatist saw that it was hopeless to ask Luther to recant, but that some sort of compromise might be arrived at. After points of difference had been discussed Luther wrote to the Elector to tell him that it had been settled that silence should be observed on both sides. Meanwhile Miltitz was to write to the Pope to suggest that the matter should be referred to some German bishop, since Luther expressed his willingness, when convinced of his errors, to recant. The two parted after a friendly dinner and a brotherly kiss.

Perhaps each thought he had scored a point. As a matter of fact, the position was unaltered. Luther wrote to the Pope a letter, couched in the most abject tone. He spoke of himself as "the very dregs of men and the dust of the earth," who is, "of necessity forced to address His Holiness and Majesty." He goes on:

> My writings have been published far and wide, they cannot be recalled. . . . They whom I have resisted, most blessed Father, have brought infamy on the Roman Church among us in Germany. . . . They blame me who have contended with such monsters. Before God and all men I attest that I have never wished, nor do I wish to-day, to touch

in any way or plot against thy power and that of the Roman Church. . . . The power of the Church is above everything in Heaven and Earth except Jesus Christ.

A few days later a great event in the world at large, the death of the Emperor Maximilian, put for the moment the thought of the troublesome monk out of the Pope's mind. There were three claimants to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire. The Pope was anxious to secure the election of Maximilian's grandson, Charles, King of Spain.

CHAPTER VI: *The Period*

IN spite of Luther's protestations in his letter to the Pope from Altenburg, the part he was to play in the drama of history was that of an opponent of the Catholic Church.

When a great man swims into our ken our first impression of him is as a being apart from, as well as above, his fellows, but in order to study his life we must try to see the period in which he lived through his own eyes. We, the inheritors of the ages, see before and after his period. The actors on the stage of history see but the past and the present, though the greatest of them strain their eyes to the distant horizon, hoping for a better future for the race.

In regard to the Reformation it is necessary never to lose sight of two points—firstly, that, though largely a religious movement, it was also a political one; secondly, that it was but a phase of the new birth of mankind to which we give the name of the Renaissance.

Ranke, in his *History of the Reformation in Germany*, says, "It is impossible to conceive a nation worthy of the name, or entitled to be called in any sense great, whose political existence is not constantly elevated and guided by religious ideas." The Catholic Church had always had its critics, and as a rule it had a short way with heretics—

the faggot and the flame. So perished the Bohemian reformer Huss, some hundred years before the time of which we are writing, and so too perished Jerome of Prague. Our English pioneer John Wycliffe, whose career in many ways curiously resembled that of Luther, was more fortunate, for he died in his bed.

The Catholic Church had meant much to Christendom in the early ages. When the nations of Europe were constantly at war with one another, gradually, though almost unconsciously, consolidating their empires, it had been a vital bond of union to hold Western Europe together. The knowledge of Latin among educated people on the Continent and in England was also a bond, for, as many books were written in that language, they could all be citizens of the commonwealth of letters.

The old order was changing, the nations were finding their individuality. Ideas were in the melting-pot: men questioned where once they believed. In order to understand how this was bound to lead to change, we must remember the enormous influence of the Church over each individual and nation. From baptism to extreme unction, and thence to the last resting-place of the tired body, the Church had her appointed duties. In an age of faith if a man were excommunicated, or a nation put under an interdict, all the consola-

tions of the Church were denied. Such was the power of the Pope.

In our own country the seed sown by Wycliffe had yet to bear fruit. We were, in the year that marked Luther's birth, still settling the rival claims of the Houses of York and Lancaster to the throne, claims which had resulted in long years of civil war, during which the flower of our young manhood fell on many a battlefield.

That year too was marked by a tragic episode in our island story, the murder of the little Princes in the Tower. When their uncle and successor, Richard III, fell, two years later, on Bosworth Field with him fell the House of York. The Wars of the Roses were ended. Henry VII came to the throne, to be succeeded by his son, Henry VIII, in whose reign the English Reformation took place. For our present purpose we need go no further, for, within a year of Luther's death, our monarch had passed to his account.

Scotland was an independent kingdom. During this period two kings successively occupied the throne—James IV, who died upon Flodden Field, fighting against the "auld enemy," England, and James V, who, though urged by Henry VIII to follow his example and despoil the Catholic Church, still clung to the old faith. Before his death the news of the birth of his daughter Mary, the future Queen of Scots, was announced. Necessarily, this

baby was Queen only in name, and a Regent was appointed.

During the Regency the Reformation began to get a definite grip on Scotland. Ireland, though largely unconquered by England, was partly under her yoke, and was not greatly influenced by the Reform movement in the Church.

A large slice of Europe formed what was known as the Holy Roman Empire, of which one of our historians has aptly remarked that it was " neither holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire." With regard to the last-named point, it is sufficient to say that it was a union of alien states and peoples, over which an Emperor held nominal rule with but a shadow of authority. His position was a great one nevertheless, for he held temporal sway over a large part of the Continent, even as the Pope held spiritual sway over Western Christendom.

During Luther's lifetime three Emperors held sway—Frederick III (1452–93), Maximilian I (1493–1519), and Charles V (1519–58).

The election of the last, as we have already said, turned the Pope's attention temporarily from the troublesome monk. The dignity of Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire was not hereditary but elective, and the right of election lay with the four lay and three ecclesiastical Princes who ruled different provinces of Germany, and were known as Electors. Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony,

though he might have been a candidate, did not wish to stand. The other serious claimants were Francis I, King of France, and Charles of Spain, though our own Henry VIII, never deficient in ambition, also offered himself as a candidate.

Charles V was twenty at the time of his election, a man of character and courage, Flemish in his stolidity, Spanish in his courtly bearing. He believed in a universal Empire and a universal Church, for the good of the world; he fought strenuously and unsuccessfully for the one, he witnessed the break-up of the other. When he came to the throne his dominions included Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Netherlands, a slice of Italy in the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, a portion of France in the province of Burgundy, and Spain, which, by a series of royal alliances, was, during most of the sixteenth century, the greatest power in Europe. And, to turn from the Old World to the New, Charles was ruler over the newly discovered Spanish provinces in the Americas.

The affairs of the Empire, the question of peace or war, the religious quarrels, were discussed and decided at Diets, or Councils, summoned, as need required, by the Emperor, and bidden to assemble at certain cities. To these Diets, over which the Emperor, when convenient to himself, presided,

came the princes, the nobility, the leading ecclesiastics, as well as representatives of the free towns which had the right of self-government. Germany at this time was not one empire, but a group of small principalities, kingdoms, and independent towns.

France was in better condition, for she was already a nation, and the separate provinces were united under one King. Union is strength. Italy, like Germany, was a country divided against itself into separate states, which were a fruitful source of European strife, and the constant quarrels of France and Germany were often fought out on her fertile plains. But in Italy was the Holy City of Rome, the seat of the Papacy, the home of the successor of the Fisherman Saint.

Though the Papacy has been called " a magnificent failure," the failure was rather in the men who occupied the throne of St Peter than in the original conception of religious unity. In the factious times of Continental strife a good Pope made for the safety of Europe ; unfortunately, such a man was rare. The Popes were not content with being spiritual heads of Christendom, they aspired to political power and were mighty princes, with like passions and ambitions to those over whom they held spiritual dominion. It would be a compliment to the pontiffs of this period to say they were no worse than the time in their morals, for the

Papacy had sunk very low. It was in the interest of Rome to stir up strife: she was the enemy of national unity, and, by reason of her position, could make and unmake kings, wage war, and impel men to serve under her banner with the idea that it was holy.

When he who was to shake this ancient throne to its foundations first saw the light Sixtus IV occupied the see; his holiness was conspicuous by its absence. Innocent VIII succeeded, a man so mercenary that it was reported that he did not wish for the death of a sinner but rather that he should live and pay. The bad deeds of these two fade into insignificance before those of the next occupier of the Vatican, Alexander VI, a scion of the terrible family of Borgia. For eleven years he was to affront all that was fine and pure in the Catholic faith by the notorious evil of his life. The voice of Savonarola arose, crying in the wilderness of the wickedness of the time. Unfortunately for himself, he plunged into politics, and Alexander VI, hitherto little troubled by his anathemas, would not suffer this, and sent him promptly to his doom. Julius II, the warrior, Leo X, patron of arts and man of the world, Adrian VI, an ecclesiastic of good intentions, each in turn became Pope.

Yet, in spite of the sordid sin that disfigured the time, there is a radiant and glorious aspect to the Renaissance.

The Dark Ages had passed, and the light of art and learning once more burst on the world. The fall of Constantinople at the hands of the Turks in 1453 had brought many Greek scholars to live in Italy, and with them came an increased interest in the study of the ancient classics and the beautiful remains of ancient art. J. A. Symonds finely says of the Renaissance that it was "a new birth to liberty, the spirit of mankind recovering consciousness and the power of self-determination, recognizing the beauty of the outer world and of the body through art, liberating the reason in science, and the conscience in religion, restoring culture to the intelligence and establishing the principle of political freedom." It stirred men's minds to independent thinking, and science began to come into her own with Copernicus, the forerunner of modern astronomy, and later with Galileo.

The Renaissance is the connecting link between the Middle Ages and the modern world, and its roots lay deep in the past. It moulded modern Europe. Italy had the good fortune to give birth to four of the greatest painters, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, and Titian—all living in Luther's day. Though men like these did much of their noble work in the service of the Church, yet on one side the Renaissance was antagonistic to Catholicism, which glorified the monastic ideal of poverty and asceticism and contempt

of worldly pleasures for the sake of winning Heaven. The Renaissance taught that it was good to live, to love, and to be loved here on earth. It tended toward self-realization rather than self-renunciation.

CHAPTER VII: *The Disputation at Leipzig* (1519)

AFTER the failure of the Augsburg conference Luther feared that his presence in Saxony might be the cause of strife. He wrote to the Elector to tell him that, rather than bring down any danger on his head, he would leave his dominions, and go "wheresoever God in His mercy shall conduct me, trusting whatever may befall in His divine Will." In other letters, especially in those written to Spalatin at this time, we find references to his friend's anxiety as to his safety:

> I beseech you, dear Spalatin, be not fearful, nor let your heart be downcast with earthly cares. You know that if Christ did not watch over me I should have perished long ago. . . . At all events, even should I perish, nothing would be lost to the world. For my friends at Wittenberg have now progressed so by God's grace that they do not need me at all.

There was a lull in Papal interference, but the truce which had been concluded with Miltitz was an empty word. Neither Luther's activity nor that of his opponents ceased for an instant.

He had many antagonists. One of the most formidable was the son of a peasant, John Eck, a learned scholar of brilliant gifts, who had risen to be Vice-Chancellor of the University of Innsbruck.

He had immediately replied to the Ninety-five Theses by writing, on behalf of the challenged doctrines, a pamphlet called *Obelisks*. In it he described Luther, somewhat prematurely but not untruly, as time was to show, as a Hussite and a despiser of the Pope. Not content with this, however, he indulged in personal abuse, hailing him as ignorant and insolent. Luther himself was no light wielder of the pen, and his opinion of Eck was no less uncompromising. He regarded him as cunning and unscrupulous, with no intention but to defame his enemy in public, and hand him over to the Pope, "devoted to all the furies." In a letter which he wrote to him on February 18, 1519, among other uncomplimentary expressions, he says that he regrets "to find so many reasons to believe that your professed friendship for me is hypocritical. . . . You have such a thick head and such a cloudy brain."

Luther, however, was rapidly gaining scholarly supporters, among them his friend Carlstadt, the Dean of Wittenberg, a man considerably his senior. He had been at first offended by the boldness of Luther's assertions. "Carlstadt and Peter Lupinus were in the beginning of the Gospel my most violent opponents; but when I convinced them with disputations and overcame them with the writings of St Augustine, and they themselves had read him, they were hotter in the matter

than I." Later on Carlstadt's opinions became so extreme that he left his master far behind. Long before this happened, however, his busy pen occupied itself in refuting Eck. Together with the letterpress he published an allegorical woodcut, which greatly annoyed his opponent. It portrayed two carriages, one bearing the crucifix, with suitable inscriptions, taking the narrow road to Heaven, the other burdened with a load of mottoes from Eck, taking the broad path to Hell.

Carlstadt, who did not seem to think that he had been at all offensive, now suggested that he should champion the Reform movement in a friendly disputation with Eck at Leipzig. Eck was quite aware, however, that the Dean was only second in command, and wrote to Luther: "Although Carlstadt is your champion, you are the real leader, you who have scattered broadcast throughout all Germany these doctrines which, to my poor and slender judgment, appear false and erroneous. Wherefore it is right that you should come to Rome, and either defend your own theses or refute mine."

Leipzig was finally the place chosen for the disputation; though the Bishop of Merseburg tried to prevent it from taking place there, Duke George of Saxony, a Catholic prince, gave his permission.

Luther, with Carlstadt, Melanchthon, and other professors, was to meet Eck there.

A word here must be said about Philip Melanch-

thon, for he was to play a great part in Luther's life and be an outstanding figure in the Reformation. He lost his father, an armourer called Schwarzerd (which means 'black earth'), when he was a small boy. Later he changed the name to Melanchthon, which has the same meaning in Greek. He was a lad of brilliant promise, and he entered the University of Heidelberg when he was thirteen. At seventeen he was Master of Arts, and at twenty he was chosen to be a Professor at Wittenberg. His reputation as a man of learning preceded him; though not a priest, he was well versed in Scripture, and, among other qualifications, he was a brilliant mathematician and classical scholar. Still, his senior associates at first, on account of his youth, doubted the wisdom of the choice. In appearance he was scarcely more than a boy, frail and small in stature, with a fine head, a high intellectual forehead, and thoughtful eyes.

His inaugural address proved at once, to professors and pupils alike, how fortunate they were to have him at the university. Luther was his friend from the first, and Melanchthon's knowledge of Greek and Hebrew was a great help to him, for he himself was not so well versed in the ancient languages. The two men, who were soon like brothers in devotion, were drawn to each other by that sympathy which often unites people of strikingly different temperaments. Luther was

vehement and passionate, Melanchthon, moderate in his views and equable in his temper, even in the heat of conflict. Luther's letter to Spalatin, at the time of Melanchthon's appointment, brims over with enthusiasm for his new friend. "He delivered an oration the fourth day after he came in the purest and most learned style. He does not need your commendation, for he has won the approval of all." Not content with this praise, Luther's practical mind was concerned as to his friend's purse, and wrote to complain to Spalatin that he did not consider that the pay was equal to the young Professor's needs.

Melanchthon had at first an open mind with regard to Luther's assertions, but he soon began to study the question carefully. He was no blind enthusiast, and he wanted to know more before he would commit himself.

We must now return to the preparations for the expedition to Leipzig. Luther, as a rule indifferent to his appearance, was anxious to look well on this occasion, and, as his clothes were shabby, he wrote to the Elector: "I beseech your Electoral grace to have the kindness to buy me a white coat and a black coat. I humbly ask for the white one, but your Highness owes me the black, having promised it to me two or three years back."

It was a curious-looking cavalcade that passed

out of Wittenberg that June morning. The conveyances for the professors and two hundred students, who had armed themselves with spears and halberds, no doubt longing for an occasion to use them, were common country wagons, into the first of which stepped Carlstadt, who was to lead the procession. When it reached the gates of the city of Leipzig Carlstadt's cart broke down, and he was flung into the mud, and in this sorry plight resigned the leadership to Luther. There were those among the people who watched their arrival who said this was an omen of disaster to the cause, and they said it with joy, for the attitude of the townsfolk was unfriendly. Indeed, it seemed at first as if the journey had been made in vain, for the Bishop of Merseburg had caused a notice to be posted on the churches forbidding the debate. Unfortunately for him, he had not asked the necessary permission for this proceeding from the town councillors, and their dignity was ruffled : the bill-poster was flung into prison, and the notice was disregarded.

The Wittenbergers too were not very welcome visitors at the inns in the town, for the landlords were so apprehensive of bloody quarrels at meals that they engaged men with halberds to stand at the tables to keep the peace. Eck was not too easy in his mind, for he called on Carlstadt, and, though it had already been agreed that the debate

should be reported, begged him ineffectually to put a stop to this.

On the following day the town was early astir, and the disputants assembled to listen to a speech before they marched in perfect silence to the church of St Thomas, where a solemn mass was sung. This over, the procession re-formed, and made its way to the magnificent and well-guarded Pleissenberg Castle on the outskirts of the town. Once through the gateway, they passed into the spacious, tapestry-hung hall, where a notable company, under the presidentship of Duke George of Saxony, assembled.

After a few words of introduction the audience joined in singing the beautiful Latin hymn *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*:

> "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
> And lighten with celestial fire,
> Thou the anointing Spirit art,
> Who dost Thy seven-fold gifts impart."

The herald then proclaimed the disputation open, and all eyes turned to the two leading opponents, standing at their desks on either side of the hall, behind Luther hanging the banner of St Martin, and behind Eck that of St George.

Carlstadt too had his place, and he and Eck opened the debate on the subject of free will. Eck was something of a bully by type, big and blustering, and his sonorous voice seemed to

drown Carlstadt's thin, harsh tones, but did not overpower his violent temper, which had its uses.

Luther did not enter the arena till the second week, and, whatever the company thought of his opinions, they could not help being impressed by his bearing as he stepped on to the platform, a bunch of flowers in his hand.

The asceticism of his life had taken toll of him physically, and he was worn and thin, but as he stood erect, and his clear penetrating voice reached their ears, the company listened spell-bound. He had the gift of eloquence and a splendid memory, but he marred his fine points by his bitterness in retort and the insulting expressions he used. Fastidiousness was never among Luther's good qualities. He was a true German, vigorous, virile, coarse, and emotional.

Without going into too much detail over the debate, it is sufficient to say that the main points at issue were the supremacy of the Pope and the authority of Councils. Catholics, as we know, hold that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ, the direct representative of St Peter, the Church is the custodian of the Scriptures, and the General Councils, which are called from time to time, are divinely appointed to interpret them, their decision being unerring and final.

Eck was a wily antagonist, and soon brought

Luther to book on the question of the Bohemian reformer, John Huss.

Luther declared that the Pope and Cardinals had not infinite wisdom, since belief in the Pope was not necessary for salvation; that every individual Christian had a right to go to the Scriptures, and there to study for himself the Will of God, that Councils were not inspired by the Holy Ghost, that they *could* err, and *did* err, in their judgments (the Council of Constance condemned Huss to the stake for heretical opinions). "Up to this time," said Luther, "I have unknowingly held and taught all John Huss's doctrines; in a like ignorance of their source has John Staupitz taught them: we are all unconscious Hussites. Paul and Augustine were Hussites."

Above the uproar caused by these bold words was heard the voice of Duke George. "A plague on it," he ejaculated, vigorously shaking his head. The effect on Eck was even worse, for he seemed to be about to burst with indignation. According to his opponent, "The reptile swelled up, painted my crime in the darkest colours, and nearly drove the audience wild by his rhetoric." Luther, not to be behind in discourtesy, shouted him down, "It's false: it's a lie!" The Duke gave the verdict: Eck was the victor.

It was over. The strains of the *Te Deum* fell soothingly on the ears of the excited audience, and

the trumpeters blew a blast as the Duke and the company retired.

Eck was feted all over the town, escorted round on horseback, invited to dinners and banquets, and was the hero of the hour. Luther was anything but pleased to see all these attentions, for the poor Wittenbergers, but for the customary present of wine, were neglected. But Luther himself was too interesting a figure to be entirely ignored. One or two of the learned professors showed him hospitality. Duke George invited him to the castle, as he wished to hold personal conference with him on the question of Huss. He was invited by the Rector to preach in the castle chapel, and such crowds flocked there that Eck was furious. True, he had the offer of four pulpits in the town where he could air his views, and refute the Wittenberg doctor, now, to Eck's joy, regarded as a heretic in the Dominican convent where he lodged. Such was the monks' antipathy to Luther that they took the Host from the altar when he entered the convent chapel.

Luther returned to Wittenberg, and Eck with all haste set off to Rome to urge the Pope without delay to issue a Bull against this pestilent heretic.

CHAPTER VIII: *The Papal Bull* (1519–20)

THE introduction of printing had come just in time to play a large part in the Reformation. Luther may be said to be the first man who was far-seeing enough to use the printing-press for what is called in our age publicity. In sixteenth-century Europe bookshops, as we know them to-day, were unknown, and printers sold their wares straight from the press. The booksellers travelled round the country, taking the volumes with them and calling at the houses of likely purchasers. Even so—and they naturally did not haunt the huts of the poor and unlettered peasantry—many of their would-be customers could not read. Needy students would add to their income by journeying either with them or after them, and reading aloud in the houses and castles to the assembled family and guests. Some enthusiasts, eager to spread Luther's views, did not need the stimulus of gain, and travelled on their own account.

After the Leipzig conference Luther set to work to write three books stating his case. The first was entitled *To the Christian Nobles of Germany*, and in it he called on all those in high places, the princes and the nobles, to reform the abuses of the Church. In dedicating the book to Nicholas von

Amsdorf he spoke of himself with the cringing humility at one time assumed by authors, a humility which seems curious and amusing in our democratic age :

> I am well aware that people will not hold me guiltless of excessive self-esteem, in that I, a poor, despised man, dare address such great and noble persons on such important affairs, as though there were none in the world except Dr Luther who could take on himself the care of the Christian estate, and give counsel to such high and mighty persons. I do not excuse myself, let him blame me who will. Perhaps I owe my God and the world some folly, which I have now undertaken, as far as in me lies, to pay honestly, even if it be to become a court fool. If I cannot pay it at least no one will dare buy me a fool's cap or cut my comb, for he who fastens bells on his neighbours must keep some for himself.

Catholics, he says, have shut themselves up in walls of " straw and paper." With trumpet-blast he rallies Germany to destroy this inflammable material. But the walls of the Catholic city were not so flimsy as he imagined, for, in spite of his protest, they stand to-day.

The first ' wall ' to be demolished was the Catholic dogma that the spiritual power is above the temporal, that of the Pope above the Emperor, that priests are subject to no authority but that of the Church. Luther trained his artillery on that wall, and, though he did not overthrow it, he shook

it to the foundations. All Christians, he declares, are alike priests, whether popes or peasants. The high dignitaries of the Church are but officers chosen for their tasks. It is as though a king had ten sons; at his death they all inherit equally, but one is chosen among them to take command.

The second 'wall' to be assaulted was more vulnerable. It was the dogma that the Pope alone can interpret Scripture. No, declares Luther. If the Pope is wicked his interpretation is bound to be wrong. Since God allowed an ass to speak against a prophet, so surely a holy man could criticize a Pope.

The third 'wall' has to do with the worldly aspect of the Papacy, and is really not so important. Only the Pope can call a Council. Luther infers that this Council would be packed with men who agreed with the Pontiff. All Christians have a right, he says, to call a Council together, and if they choose to do so can summon one against the Pope. In this he gives his case away somewhat, for he infers that both sides would pack the Councils with their adherents.

Had these three trumpet-blasts been heard throughout Christendom, and had Luther's views been accepted, he would have shattered the whole fabric of the Catholic Church, for it was built on the idea that the Church throughout the ages was

the embodiment of truth, and the Pope when speaking as the head of it—*ex cathedra*, as it is called—is the very voice of God. In his private capacity alone he was subject to human frailty.

Anyone who had studied the gospels must have wondered that the pioneers of Christianity, who had been

> Mocked, imprisoned, stoned, tormented,
> Sawn asunder, slain with sword,

should have for their successors the Popes, Cardinals, and higher clergy of the Renaissance, who enjoyed, without a qualm, all the luxury of the age, and at times practised most of its vices.

Luther was thinking of those who had come out of great tribulation in the brave days of old, and those who in his day wished to bear " the palm without the dust," owing to the Pope's influence, when he tells them, " If you try to ride to Heaven on the Pope's wax and parchment your carriage will soon break down and you will fall into Hell."

He hated the exaggerated homage paid to the Pope, the kissing of his feet, even as Christ's feet had been kissed by the repentant Magdalene. And again he asked his readers to consider this question. On the Papal brow, as they knew, rested a triple tiara of spiritual and temporal power. Was he, with this jewel-studded diadem on his head, the representative of One Who had not where to lay His head and Who wore a crown of thorns ? And

what of the retinue of the Holy Father, even greater than that of the Emperor? Was it to be compared to that of Him Who had but twelve disciples?

For all this pomp and luxury Western Christendom had to pay, and 300,000 gulden were extorted from Germany yearly. Many curious expedients were devised for filling the Papal coffers, and the extortions fell heavily enough on the rich, and made the poor even poorer. And even when Germany had paid in full there was neither gratitude nor recognition, for the German was looked on with scorn as a dolt and a dullard who allowed himself to be easily fleeced.

Like most great men, Luther entered the arena at the critical hour. There had already been mutterings of revolt, but no one had yet given a clear and forceful expression to what thousands were thinking and feeling. So when he brought out his book four thousand copies were quickly sold—an enormous circulation in those days—and fresh editions were soon called for.

Within three months another book appeared entitled *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church.* This, unlike the first, which was in German, was written in Latin, and was intended for the more highly educated. Luther based his argument on the fact that, as the Jews of old had been carried captive into Babylon, so had the Church been

carried into captivity by the Papacy. The sacrament of the Mass, he declared, had lost half its meaning, for the priests alone were permitted to drink of the wine, which in some mystic way was transformed into the very blood of Christ, while the laity partook only of the bread, His sacred body. The Mass had come to be, so Luther thought, little more than a source of superstition. It was said for the souls of those who had passed into the great beyond. Could they benefit by the prayers of the living ?

Luther held a robuster faith. " I declare," quoth he, " that neither Pope, bishop, nor any man, has the power to impose the smallest matter on a Christian, except by his own consent."

The fame of this pamphlet spread to England, and Henry VIII himself deigned to take notice of it. The Tudor monarch replied by a pamphlet against Luther, which some asserted was not actually written by the King himself, but which certainly expressed his views. He was keenly interested in questions of the kind, and he had probably consulted Cardinal Wolsey, Bishop Fisher, and Sir Thomas More. Luther, however, doubted that the King had written it himself, and Henry indignantly replied, " Although ye fayne yourself to thynke my boke not myne owne, yet it is well knowen for mine, and I for myne avowe it." Henry was very proud of his excursion into authorship, and

sent the Pope a copy bound in cloth of gold, with a Latin couplet in his own fine handwriting, "Henry, King of England, sends this work, a testimony of faith and friendship to Leo X." That friendship, as we know, was later to be broken, but at the time the Pope was gratified, and the author had the satisfaction of hearing that "his Holiness in reading at such places as he likes (and that seemed to be at every second line) made ever some demonstration." This book won for the English King the title of *Fidei Defensor* (Defender of the Faith), which our monarchs retained after the severance from Rome, and which remains—in its abbreviated form—after their names on our coins to this day.

Luther's third book was called *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, and was a striking treatise on the relation of man to his Maker. What shall it profit the soul to wear vestments, to fast, to pray with the lips? A Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and his neighbour: in Christ through faith, in his neighbour through love. Through faith he reaches upward to God, through love downward to his neighbour.

The three books epitomized Luther's aims, though he modified some of his views later. They showed what in his opinion was the Christian's duty to the State, to the Church, and to God.

All Germans who could read, or cared to be read

to, soon had these books in their hands. The effect was tremendous. Many joined the movement, though for varied reasons. The majority were high-minded men and women, influenced solely by the spiritual side of the teaching, eager for truth; others were those who, in all ages, find an appeal in something new, the sort of people who dislike to get into ruts and are always questioning; a few, an ignoble band, hoped to profit by the plunder of the abbeys and to save the money yielded to Rome. Many too were political, rather than religious, adherents. Germany was under the yoke of Italy, for the Pope was an Italian, and the national feeling began to find its expression in this revolt. Among the last-named were two men who were to do much for the cause—Ulrich von Hutten, that fascinating figure in German history, who had travelled in Italy and become imbued with hatred of the Pope, and the knight Franz von Sickingen, a born fighter, a man of great possessions.

Now was the time for the Pope to take action, for the election of Charles V had settled the question of the succession to the Holy Roman Empire. Eck, who was at the Pope's Court, found him a ready listener to his urgent counsel that extreme measures should be employed against Luther. On June 24, 1520, Leo X issued his Papal Bull of Excommunication: "Arise, O Lord, and avenge Thy cause; foxes have arisen, seeking to spoil the

vineyard whose winepress Thou hast trodden alone, a wild beast is there seeking to devour." St Peter is invoked, and urged to intervene because false teachers lie against the truth ; St Paul too and the whole hierarchy of the saints are called upon, since Luther's gospel is of the devil. Forty-one "poisonous and pernicious errors" are selected from his writings. The Pope had done all in his power to bring him to a better frame of mind, and to persuade him to cease from spreading false doctrine. Now he and his accomplices are allowed sixty days after the publication of the Bull to desist from their errors. If they do not avail themselves of this last chance they will be condemned as "withered branches of the church." Luther's books will be burnt, and the faithful will not be allowed to associate with him or his adherents, or to supply him with the necessities of life.

Luther, anxious to gain the favour of the new Emperor, wrote him a letter beneath the dignity of manhood in its absurd humility, for he refers to himself as "a single flea" who dares to address "the king of kings."

The "single flea" knew how to act without his monarch's approval. At the outset the Bull was not favourably received. When it was published at Erfurt the students tore it down and threw it into the river. Eck had written to the Rector of the University of Wittenberg requesting that the

Bull, which reached there at the beginning of October, should be put into force at once, adding the threat that if this were not done the Pope would withdraw certain privileges which had been granted to the university.

In the middle of October Luther wrote to the Pope a letter which is a great contrast to the one he wrote not long before (see p. 55). "Father Leo," he said, "beware how you listen to those sirens who make you no mere man, but a demi-god, so that you can command and exact whatever you will. It will not be so always nor will you prevail; you are a servant of servants. . . . Let them not deceive you who pretend that you are Lord of the World."

A few weeks later Luther wrote to Spalatin: "Never since the beginning of the world has Satan spoken so shamelessly against God as in this Bull. It is impossible for anyone who accepts it, and does not contest it, to be saved."

He appealed from the Pope to a General Council, and wrote a violent pamphlet against the Bull.

When Luther heard that his books had been burned at Louvain and Cologne he determined to mete the same measure to the Papal Bull. On December 10 he pasted a notice on the university board inviting his friends to meet at nine in the morning at the church of the Holy Cross beyond the city wall, outside the Elster Gate.

The university was abandoned. Students and townsfolk flocked to the meeting-place, hard by the pest-house. Here a great bonfire had been lit, and into the burning pyre Luther thrust the Papal books that he banned. The flames lit up the eager faces of the crowd, half-defiant and half-fearful, and all eyes were riveted on the Doctor's face as he stepped forward and into the white heat of the fire flung the Papal Bull, exclaiming, " Because thou didst trouble the holy one of the Lord may eternal fire consume thee ! "

When all was over Luther retired to the monastery, but the students broke out into revelry, somewhat like a university ' rag ' of our own day, tempered by religious feelings, for the revels started with the singing of the noble words of the *Te Deum*, " We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord." After this there was uproar. In fancy dress, wearing masks, they paraded the town on a cart, demanding Papal books to be added to the funeral pyre, which they kept bravely blazing till a goodly pile had been disposed of.

For Luther it was one of the milestones of life's journey, and he wrote to Staupitz, " I have burned the Pope's books and the Bull, at first trembling and praying, but now I am more joyful than at any other act of my whole life."

Luther burning the Papal Bull

CHAPTER IX: *The Diet of Worms* (1521)

LUTHER had now shown every sort of defiance, by spoken word at Leipzig, by written word in the three books just mentioned, and by the symbolic deed in the burning of the Papal Bull. His unpopularity had become dangerous to his safety. "Some would gladly crucify him," it was said, "only they must take care that he rise not again on the third day."

At last it was settled that he should stand his trial, and for this purpose he was offered a safe-conduct to Rome. Eventually, however, it was decided that he should face this ordeal in his own country, and he was bidden to appear before Charles V at the Imperial Diet at Worms. It may be mentioned in passing that Diet was the name given to assemblies, called by the Emperor at will, to discuss and decide political and ecclesiastical matters. The word is derived from the Latin *dies*, a day, whence it came to mean a day set apart for some special purpose, assemblage, or discussion. "We have determined," so ran the summons to Luther, "we and the States of the Holy Roman Empire, to receive information from thee concerning the doctrine and the books which have been uttered by thee."

Luther did not flinch, though he knew the grave

perils that awaited him. On his journey to Worms some zealous advocate of the Pope might settle all the trouble by assassinating him. If he escaped that danger, and the verdict of the Diet went against him, he might share the fate of Huss and perish in the flames. His friends were so much alarmed at the risks he ran that they urged him not to go, and Franz von Sickingen offered him safe shelter, but he refused to avail himself of it. He was no coward, and they were brave words that he wrote to Spalatin :

> I will go if I am carried sick in my bed. I am called of the Lord when the Emperor calls me. Further, if they intend violence, as is very likely, my case is to be commended to the Lord. The same Lord lives and reigns Who preserved the three youths in the fiery furnace of Babylon, and if He does not choose to preserve me my head is a very small thing in comparison with Christ, Who was slain with the utmost ignominy. . . . I trust only that the Emperor will not begin his reign by shedding innocent blood, I would rather be murdered by them of Rome.

Luther's first followers had now to decide definitely whether their belief in his mission was sufficiently strong to induce them to sever their lifelong allegiance to the Pope. His friend and first teacher, Staupitz, could no longer tread the same path. He would not denounce his former pupil, though urged to do so, and simply remarked, " Martin has undertaken a difficult task, and acts

with great courage." Staupitz submitted himself, however, to the judgment of the Pope. This defection was a serious blow to Luther, who wrote sadly to him, "You are very different from the man who was the herald of grace and the cross."

The Diet actually assembled on January 27, but it had other business to discuss before the heretic monk's case came on, though, before his arrival, the Emperor commanded that all Luther's books in the town should be surrendered.

Luther set out from Wittenberg at the beginning of April, travelling in an open wagon, sheltered with leather curtains and preceded by the Emperor's herald. It had been lent by the town council. The journey held many a good augury for the future of the reformer, and enthusiastic crowds greeted him on his way. "Whenever he entered a city," one chronicler wrote, "the people flocked to meet him outside the gates, to gaze upon the wonderful man who was so bold as to set himself against the Pope and all who, in opposition to Christ, look upon the Pope as God." At Erfurt he was escorted through the town by a party of horsemen, and the Augustinian Church was packed with people anxious to hear him.

Though taken ill at Erfurt, which might have been an excuse for delay, he made light of the matter and continued his journey. Once again, when he reached Oppenheim, he was warned that he

might share the fate of Huss. "Huss was burnt, but not the truth with him. If there be as many devils at Worms as tiles on the roof-tops, I will enter," was his spirited reply. His courage rose with danger. "I was then a fearless man, I dreaded nothing. God can inspire a man with so much daring."

Worms at that day was one of the most important towns in Europe, with its quaint old houses clustering round the minster of red sandstone, which still stands to bear witness to the dignity of the city. Little else now remains, for that medieval town of ancient splendour was destined to be almost wholly destroyed during the Thirty Years' War.

A trumpet-blast from the watcher on the Tower Gate of the city announced Luther's approach, and when he entered the gates, preceded by the herald, the streets were thronged with sightseers. A great number of princes and nobles were lodging in the city at the time, and the inhabitants were not loath to profiteer, so much so that an attempt was made to fix prices for food, which was not only expensive, but so badly cooked that even the Elector Frederick had to complain. Lodgings too were hard to find, and Luther was lodged, not, as the Papal nuncio, Aleander, had hoped, as a prisoner in the royal palace, but as a guest in the house of the Knights of St John.

Aleander had been quietly noting the tone of the

inhabitants, and his observations were not to his liking. "All Germany is in commotion. Nine out of ten cry, 'Luther': the tenth, though not in his favour, still cries, 'Death to the Court of Rome,' and insists that a Council shall be held in Germany."

April 17 and four in the afternoon were the day and hour appointed for Luther's appearance before the Diet. It was with great difficulty that he reached his destination, for the crowds surged through the main streets, and he had to be escorted by back ways to the Imperial Palace.

In the great Hall of State, presiding over his first Diet, sat the Emperor, who was only twenty-one at the time. As he lifted his eyes with curious gaze to the troublesome monk who faced him, a sense of antipathy seems to have surged up in him. "This man," he is said to have exclaimed, "will never make a heretic of *me*." With him were the elect—his own brother, Ferdinand, Aleander and Caracciolo, the Papal nuncios, the Electors, nobles and members of the Court, together with representatives of the free cities.

It was an assembly that might have awed the bravest, but Luther in his professorial robes stood before it undaunted, undismayed. The dignity of his bearing was noticed by all as his deep-set eyes rested on the official 'Trier,' who thus began:

" Martin, the Emperor has summoned you hither for two ends. First, to say whether you have published these books," pointing to a pile of his publications on the table, " and secondly whether you will recant or abide by them. Let the titles of the books be read out."

" The books are mine, I deny none of them," was the proud reply. For a moment it seemed as if his courage would fail him, his voice was low and faltering and he hesitated. " It is a question of faith and the salvation of souls," he said as he begged for time for deliberation. " That I may answer without injury to the divine word or peril to my soul."

Friends and enemies alike exchanged glances, the latter thinking that, as he had already had plenty of time to prepare his case, he was trying to evade the issue. However, a day's leave was granted him, and he returned to his lodgings and spent the night in prayer. " Do Thou, my God, stand by me against all the world's wisdom and reason. Not mine, but Thine, is the cause."

Refreshed in spirit by his vigil, at four on the following day he once more appeared before the Diet. Excitement was rife. As the dim shadows of the spring afternoon were lighted by the glare of torches, the faces of the audience, tense with excitement, gave token of the seething passions which had been roused. Why had the monk asked

for delay? Did he flinch before the dread ordeal? Would he bend the knee to Rome?

Once again the official Trier addressed him: "Now at last reply to the demand of his Majesty, whose clemency you have experienced in obtaining time to deliberate. Do you wish to defend all your books or to retract part of them?"

The conflict had passed: his voice was calm and clear.

"Most serene Emperor, most illustrious Princes, most clement Lords," so he addressed the august assembly. Though he gave no direct reply to the question, he informed them that some of the books were approved even by his enemies; in others he attacked what he regarded as the evils of the Papacy. He had no reason to disavow the first, the second he could not disavow, for by so doing he would only increase the evil at which he had struck these blows. The one admission he made was that the books he had published against private persons might be tinged with too much bitterness. "Unless I am convicted of error by the Scriptures, or by powerful reason, neither can I nor will I dare to retract anything, for my conscience is bound to God's word. Here stand I: I can do no other! God help me, amen."

The audience was frantic: hissing was drowned by applause as the bold figure stood there in the gathering gloom, ready to meet his fate and accept

his doom. He had endured the supreme test, and had been valiant for the truth as he saw it.

His friends, in grave anxiety as to the issue, awaited him at his lodgings. He greeted them with exultation. "Had I a hundred heads," he said, "they should all have been cut off before I would recant a word!"

On May 26 the Imperial Edict was proclaimed. Martin Luther was adjudged a heretic and an outlaw from the Church of God, his writings were condemned as a "cesspool of heresies," he was neither to print nor to sell them. Whoever hereafter sheltered or succoured him would be under the ban of Empire. He was to be delivered up to death. The State had endorsed the condemnation of the Church. Aleander was able to send the joyful news to Rome.

CHAPTER X: *The Wartburg* (1521–22)

LUTHER had already left Worms, for on the morning of April 26 he set out for Möhra on the slope of the Thuringian Forest on a visit to his grandmother and uncle. Here, under a linden-tree, he preached to the people. His stay was brief, his future all unknown, and it was with sinking hearts that his relatives escorted him to the outside of the town and bade him good-bye. With two friends he journeyed on through the Thuringian Forest, and as they passed through the deep glades the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard and a body of armed knights surrounded him, not entirely to the surprise of his companions, for they had heard he would be rescued, and they made off without farewells, leaving Luther to his fate. He rode with his captors eight miles through the dim aisles of the forest, till high above them rose the fine old Gothic Castle of the Wartburg, which had formerly been the home of the sainted Elizabeth of Hungary during her short married life.

The clattering of horses' hoofs was heard by the servants, and at midnight the drawbridge was let down, the portcullis was raised, and Luther and his escort entered the courtyard. Here he was welcomed by the custodian, Herr von Berlepsch,

on behalf of the Elector Frederick, the lord of the castle, and conducted to his chamber, where all was in readiness for him, the courtly clothes which he was to don, with the golden chain, laid out, since it had been decided that in this retreat, where none but his host and hostess knew his identity, he was to pass as a noble and be known as 'Squire George.' It was some time before the one-time monk could look the part, but by the time his hair and beard had grown he was accustomed to his new mode of life.

In all ways he was treated as an honoured guest of the Elector, and in all his life he had never known so much worldly comfort and delight, such dainty fare, both in meat and drink, such pleasant surroundings, and such cheerful company. He enjoyed the pleasures of a country gentleman, riding abroad, attended by pages, and hunting, "the bittersweet pleasure of heroes," as he called it. But he was too humane a man thoroughly to enjoy such sport, and one day, when a little hare, pursued by the yelping dogs, bounded toward him, he sheltered the poor creature as best he could in the sleeve of his coat, but, unfortunately, the hounds dashed upon him and secured their prey.

He still pursued his intellectual studies, and was absorbed in his work many hours during the day. From the windows of his room there was a glorious view of the surrounding country, and of the noble

forest with its pines, larches, birches, and oaks in all the clean greenness of early spring. Here surely was the home for a poet, and for the first time we are conscious of a vein of poetry in Luther's nature, even in the heading of his letters, some being written as from " The Mountain Top," " The Wilderness," " The Isle of Patmos." Notwithstanding the vagueness of such addresses many of his friends knew where he was and would come by night to see him. Yet the secret was well kept, and his disguise so good that he was able to visit neighbouring towns without being recognized.

In spite of all this comfort, there were times when his restless spirit would assert itself and he longed to be active in the movement once more. Still for the time being he had to be content to allow others to keep the flag flying ; and he wrote to Melanchthon :

" You are already full, you reign without me. Nor do I see why you desire me so greatly, or what need you have of my labours. You seem to invent difficulties, for your affairs go better in my absence than when I am present."

He suffered much from illness of body and mind. We have seen how troubled he was in his early monastic days by haunting thoughts. They again assailed him in his solitude. The devil himself, he declared, appeared to him many a time, as he

sat in his chamber, sometimes disguised as a black dog, tormenting him with noises, sometimes in other shapes, but always, as he deemed, no vision, but a living horror. In order to understand Luther's conviction that he was visited by Satan himself, it must be remembered that in the Middle Ages most people believed in a personal devil, a fallen angel, who had been expelled from Paradise, who reigned in Hell, and who, at times, came to earth to trouble unhappy human beings, invisible as a rule, but sometimes actually seen. Luther, in great agitation, took his inkpot and flung it at him when this monster appeared. That Thomas Carlyle was deeply impressed by the thought of this scene when he visited the Wartburg is obvious from what he wrote about it :

> One feels—standing in Luther's room, with Luther's poor old oaken table, oaken ink-holder still there, and his mark on the wall which the Devil has not yet forgotten—as if here once more, with mere Heaven and the silent Thuringian Hills looking on, a grand and grandest battle of one man versus the Devil and all men was fought, and the latest prophecy of the Eternal was made to these sad ages that yet run ; as if here, in fact, of all places that the sun now looks upon, were the holiest for a modern man.

The Devil was not Luther's only supernatural visitor. Ghosts came to him, so he told his doctor, and angels were not far away.

> The angels are near us and visit those creatures whom, by God's command, they are to keep and preserve, to the end that they receive no hurt of the Devil. And, withal, they behold God's face and stand before Him. Therefore, when the Devil intendeth to hurt us, then the loving holy angels do resist and drive him away; for the angels have long arms, and, although they stand before the face and in the presence of God and His Son Christ, yet they are near us in our affairs, which by God in our vocations we are commanded to take in hand. The Devil is also near and about us, and every twinkling of an eye tracketh our steps in order to deprive us of our lives, our saving health and salvation. But the holy angels do defend us from him, inasmuch as he is not able to work as much mischief as willingly as he would. Many devils are in woods, in waters, in wildernesses, and in dark places, ready to hurt and prejudice people; some are also in the thick black clouds, which do cause hail, lightnings and thunderings, do poison the air, the pastures and grounds.

Work was essential to Luther and a relief to his troubled thoughts, and in his retreat he wrote his book on monastic vows. But a far greater and more important work was his retranslation of the Bible into German. It was not the first time the 'Book of Books' had been translated, but previously the Latin translation of St Jerome, known as the Vulgate, had been the version chosen. Luther, for the New Testament, went to an edition in the original Greek, which Erasmus had brought

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out. In Germany in those days there were two dialects, known as High German and Low German, and, as he spoke the former, it was this language he chose, and thus, all unconsciously, made it the universal literary tongue for his countrymen.

He was singularly well qualified for this task, for he wanted to make this version a Bible for the uncultured many, not only for the cultured few. Hence he used phrases and racy idioms that gave the meaning of passages in a way to be generally understood. "One has to ask the mother in her home, the children in the street, the common man in the market place, and to look at their mouths to see how they speak, and thence to interpret it to oneself, and so to make them understand. I have often laboured to do this, but have not always succeeded in hitting off the meaning." As for the Old Testament, he had, he said, a great and laborious task "to force Hebrew writers to talk German." But he *did* force them to do it, and his translation of the Bible remains the noblest monument to his memory, and has had as great an influence on the German language and literature as our incomparable Authorized Version has upon our own.

Such was his tremendous industry that in less than three months he had finished a rough translation of the whole of the New Testament. He was not entirely satisfied with it, and later on con-

Luther translating the Bible

sulted Melanchthon and other scholars with regard to its revision. On September 21, 1522, the first edition of the New Testament, illustrated by Cranach, was published at what was then a fairly heavy price—one and a half gulden. The translation of the Old Testament was not brought out till 1532.

Events in the world from which he was exiled troubled him greatly. Deep was his indignation, and fiery was the pamphlet he wrote, when he heard that the Archbishop of Mainz was starting a fresh sale of indulgences. The Elector Frederick, when he heard of the latest outpourings of the outlawed monk, forbade him, through his chaplain, to publish it. Luther, undaunted, utterly refused compliance with the mandate of his protector, and, furthermore, wrote a letter of such violent remonstrance to the Archbishop of Mainz that the recipient stopped the proposed sale.

So passed nine months in alternate comfort and conflict till Luther, unable to bear his exile any longer, paid a secret visit to Wittenberg. It was at this time that the portrait of him in his squire's dress was painted by Cranach. The reports to him of the reform movement at Wittenberg had been unsatisfactory, not because of the apathy of his adherents, but because of their energy. The students had outstripped their master in their zeal, and in their case it was not tempered with discretion. His

friend Carlstadt, with many of the students in his wake, was carrying matters to extremes. Luther's anxiety was great, he had rather face all consequences to himself than see what was his life-work wrecked by fanatics. So he wrote to Frederick, rather ungratefully, one cannot help thinking, "I have written to your Grace to inform you that I am going to Wittenberg and that under a far higher protection than that of the Elector." And so he now left the Mountain Top for good. On his way back he halted at the Great Bear inn at Jena. Here he met two Swiss students on their way to the University of Wittenberg, and got into conversation with them. The burly, bearded traveller, seated in the public room, reading a book, attracted the attention of the young men. Not many people were given to reading, either in public or private. Seeing their interest, Luther asked them: "Where are you going?"

"To Wittenberg."

"Well, you will find good compatriots there, the Brothers Jerome and Augustine Schurf."

"Is Luther still at Wittenberg?"

"No, but he will return shortly. What do the Swiss think of him?"

"There are different opinions, sir: some cannot praise him enough: others condemn him."

As Luther went on talking to them one of the students picked up the book he was reading and

noticed that it was a Hebrew psalter, but this did not give him an inkling as to his identity. For when the landlord, beckoning one of the lads out of the room, asked him if he would like to know who his fellow-traveller might be, the young man received the proffered information as a joke, and believed that the bearded stranger was actually the famous Ulrich von Hutten.

Presently other travellers came into the common room at the inn, and, among them, two merchants, one of whom took a book from his pocket and placed it on the table before him. Luther glanced up, and asked the stranger what he was reading.

" Dr Luther's interpretation of the Gospels and Epistles—have you seen it ? "

" I shall soon," he answered quietly.

Supper was now ready, and Luther invited the students to be his guests, and greatly they enjoyed the evening and his illuminating conversation. As they bade him a cordial farewell he said, " When you reach Wittenberg give my regards to Dr Schurf."

" Shall we give your name, sir ? "

" Say that one who is coming sends his greetings."

The students reached Wittenberg, and so did their fellow-traveller, who was the first to pay the call on the Swiss professor, and was in his study

when his two young friends were ushered in. Great was their surprise when they discovered that the landlord of the Great Bear inn had not been playing a trick upon them. This chance meeting marked an epoch in their lives.

CHAPTER XI: *The Peasants' War* (1522–25)

CARLSTADT and Melanchthon had kept the flag flying in Luther's absence, but neither was a born leader. Melanchthon was a man of finely balanced mind, moderate in counsel, irresolute in action. Carlstadt was unbalanced, immoderate, and resolute, and all for reform in a hurry. On Christmas Day he discarded all priestly vestments for the Mass, and gave the laity the wine as well as the wafer. Other zealots, following in his steps, required no preparation or confession from communicants, substituted German for Latin in the services, and removed all the images of the saints. In the eyes of the men of the time each innovation was a separate challenge to the old beliefs. After Christmas serious disturbances arose when Nicholas Störch, and Thoma, both cloth-weavers, together with Stübner, a former Wittenberg student, arrived at that town from Zwickau, and proclaimed that they were prophets of the Lord, that they had had personal conversation with God, and were illumined by an " inner light " from Heaven. This, together with the Bible, as interpreted by them, was the law of life. Furthermore, visions had been vouchsafed to them to inspire them in their great work. All this would have been harmless enough, if they had not, in

their fanatical zeal, desired to make converts. At first they were favourably received, Melanchthon was interested, Carlstadt a believer, and even the Elector declined to take action lest he should be found "fighting against God."

Luther heard of their doings when at the Wartburg, and had written to Amsdorf, "Do not be too easily moved by the Zwickau prophets . . . first prove their spirits whether they be of God. There seems to me at first sight strong cause for suspicion in the fact that they pretend to receive revelations from on high." In another communication to Melanchthon he bade him take no action, but "wait and see."

The Zwickau prophets also taught a crude form of socialism. Since all men are brothers, all should share alike, and have their possessions in common. They also interpreted the text, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," to signify that the christening of infants was wrong, since a baby could not have faith; hence they became known as Anabaptists. They and their followers smashed images, burnt churches, declared that all learning was valueless; in some cases they were so extreme as to insist that all books but the Bible should be burnt—no great loss to many of their followers, since they did not care for learning and could not read. What was hidden from the wise and prudent had been revealed to babes, the prophets

declared, and, though they did not actually consult prattling children, they went to the humblest folk to gather their views on the interpretation of difficult passages of Scripture.

Luther saw in them a menace, not only to his nursling Church, but to the state. No sooner was he back in Wittenberg than he mounted the pulpit, and for eight days in succession, in eight successive sermons, he attacked them. The sermons were so eloquent that the Zwickau prophets thought it wiser to depart and shed their 'new light' elsewhere. They were soon joined by their most notable adherent, Thomas Münzer, at one time a Lutheran, and now destined to be the most violent and foolish exponent of their doctrine. His ideal was a return to the primitive simplicity of an earlier day when, according to his dim notions, all shared and shared alike in a sort of earthly Paradise where wealth did not corrupt or poverty penalize these happy folk. To restore this state, pending the millennium, which he daily expected, was the dream of his life. From the pulpit in Allstedt he preached a rousing sermon before the Elector Frederick, in which he openly accused the Princes of plundering the poor, and Luther of being privy to it. He was compelled to leave the town and retire to Mühlhausen, which is especially associated with his labours.

Carlstadt remained for a time at Wittenberg.

The seed sown by his fellow-zealots had borne a plentiful crop in his erratic mind. He was sincere, though unbalanced, and at last, haunted by the text "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread," had the courage of his convictions. He resigned his professorship, left the town, and, garbed as a peasant, lived an austere life, working in the fields, and preaching the Gospel. In the nineteenth century the great Russian writer Tolstoi felt a like call, and, though, owing to the claims of his family, he never really lived the life as Carlstadt did, he died in a final attempt to achieve it.

The Zwickau prophets lit the torch of war, of class against class, of peasants against princes. The rising, with all the misery and tragedy involved, was akin to that later and greater upheaval, the French Revolution. In both cases the grievances were not of to-day or yesterday, but had their roots in the long-suffering past. The condition of the German labourers at this time was wretched. Small wonder that, in the depth of their humiliation, they were eager listeners to the preachers of social equality.

The influence of the Reformation did not so much kindle the fire as fan the flames. For, before Luther leapt into fame, the peasants had associations known as *Bundschuhe*, in which they banded themselves together to resist the unjust claims of

their masters and the exorbitant demands of the clergy.

In one sense alone Luther was responsible. He was the head of the movement which had led to the questioning of old faiths, old loyalties. If the supremacy of the Popes was challenged, why not the supremacy of the Princes? The peasants were little better than slaves bound to the soil after the old feudal fashion, forced to work for their lord, and, for all their days of toil, earning a bare subsistence. It was not only the hardship of their lot, but the petty tyranny they endured that filled their cup of misery to overflowing. Huntsmen and hounds would gallop over their ripe fields and ruthlessly trample their crops. At harvesting their lord had first call on their labour: on fine days they garnered his grain, on wet ones they did as best they could with their own sodden sheaves. Some of their complaints were pathetic in their triviality. A Countess of Lupfen had set them to work to hunt for snail-shells, on which to wind yarns; another employer had expected them to spend their Church holiday gathering strawberries for his table. The slightest insubordination was cruelly punished: imprisonment, blinding, maiming, and death were the fate of culprits.

The peasants set forth their demands, twelve in number, in a pamphlet in which they began by

stating that love and peace and unity were their desire. As with the demands of the Chartists in England in the first half of the nineteenth century, we, looking back down the long track of years, can see nothing unreasonable or unfair in the claims of these German peasants. The most important points were that they should be allowed to choose their own pastor and dismiss him at need, that the smaller tithes should be abolished (for " God created the beasts of the field as a free gift for the use of mankind "), the larger tithes still being paid, since they were authorized by the Old Testament, and that they should be granted personal liberty, to be no longer regarded as serfs, and to receive payment in money for their services and the right of hewing wood, of fishing in the flowing streams, of browsing cattle on the pasture lands. In conclusion, they promised that should any of these demands be contrary to Scripture they would relinquish them.

Further claims, which throw an interesting light on the customs of the time, were made by other peasants. They begged not to be compelled to hang bells round their dogs' necks, that the goods of suicides should no longer revert to the lord, that neither man nor woman should be punished for marrying without his permission.

What message had Luther for these oppressed people ? Did he believe that, since all Christians

shared alike the spiritual power as inheritors of Heaven, they should also share in the temporal power as inheritors of the earth? Assuredly not! Christianity freed the soul of man, his body was still in thrall to the law of the land. The peasants were the property of their masters: hence it was necessary and right to obey princes and magistrates. Fortunately for his reputation, he was at least fair-minded enough to recognize that all the blame was not on one side, and, in consequence, set his busy pen to work on a pamphlet addressed to the nobility.

> We need thank no one on earth [he wrote] for this foolish rebellion but you, my lords, and especially you, blind bishops, parsons, and monks, for you, even yet hardened, cease not to rage against the Holy Gospel, although you know our cause is right and you cannot controvert it. Besides this, in civil government you do nothing but oppress and tax to maintain your pomp and pride, until the poor common man neither can nor will bear it any longer.

The peasantry were unlucky in their leaders, and unfortunate in not being sufficiently organized to act together, though the revolt took the form of a series of risings inspired by the same aim. Thomas Münzer led the peasants of Thuringia, Hans Mullet, of Bulgenbach, roused those of the Black Forest. The latter had an eye for dramatic effect. Clad in scarlet cap and gown and preceded

by a herald, he journeyed from town to town and village to village. Behind his carriage waved the red and white standard of revolt, and bands of insurgents followed on foot in his train. At every hamlet the procession halted, and the herald, sometimes in the ale-houses, sometimes in the open road, read the twelve articles as though they were a royal proclamation. Crowds of villagers, unkempt and ill-equipped, joined the straggling procession in the hopes of a better future for themselves and their children—hopes, alas, to be trampled in the dust.

Carlstadt did not believe in pomp and circumstance and trudged Franconia on foot, yet he had no less success in enlisting followers.

In the first encounters the peasantry were triumphant and when in power proved themselves as merciless as their masters. A certain Count Holfenstein was captured; he had a black record, and their hearts hardened at the sight of their victim. He stood proudly awaiting their verdict, and within full view of him, in his hour of peril, stood his wife and child. His judges hurled deep curses at him, and taunted him with his crimes. "Thou hast caused the hands of my father to be smitten off for that he killed a hare in his own field." Turning from him to his supercilious and frightened Countess, one of the rebels charged her too: "Thy horsemen, thy dogs, and thy huntsmen

have trodden down my fields. My boy opposed you, and was cast into prison. Vengeance!" A dagger, hurtling through the air, found its mark in her child sheltering in her arms.

The Count begged for mercy for himself and his wife, offering his fortune for their ransom.

"Not if you offer us an equal weight in pearls," they replied, "will we forgo our revenge." They forced him to run the gauntlet of their spears, while his own piper danced and sang his favourite songs in savage joy as he witnessed his agony.

When the ordeal was over, and the oppressor lay dead, a gaunt and sinister figure approached, the witch Höffman. She plunged her knife into his already bleeding breast, smearing herself with the blood. Her example was followed by the victorious throng. The Countess, clasping her wounded child, was held up so that she should be spared no pang; then, not yet glutted with revenge, they removed her fine robes, clad her in rags, and drove her away on a dung cart.

So far the peasants, fierce and formidable, were victorious. The country was in grave peril and the rebellion was spreading. Luther seemed to be solely concerned with the effect of the rising on the Reformation. It was his aim to reform the Church, not society, and he had scant sympathy with social abuses. With political insight

he saw that no alliance with the peasants was practicable.

When the rebellion was at its height he dipped his pen in vitriol and wrote a pamphlet which is not pleasant reading. It was addressed to the "murderous peasants." They were told that, in the author's view, it would be better that they were all killed than that the princes and magistrates should perish.

> In my previous book I did not judge the peasants, for they offered to listen to instruction and yield to the right. But before I could do anything, forgetting their offer, they rushed forward and plunged into the affair with clenched fists. They rob, and rage, and act like mad dogs. It is easy enough to see now what they had in their false minds. The proposals they made in twelve articles on the basis of the Gospel were evidently nothing but lies. . . . Our peasants want to share the goods of others and keep their own. Fine Christians they are! I doubt whether there are any devils left in Hell, for they all seem to have entered into the peasants, and passion has gone beyond all bounds. . . . Let all who are able slaughter and stab them openly or in secret, and remember there is nothing more poisonous nor devilish than a rebel. You must kill him as you would a mad dog.

Yet the author of these cruel words was himself a rebel against the authority of the Pope. They were not penned in haste, for he never repented of

"Their cause was lost, their hopes defeated" 114

them. Mercy, he declared, had nothing to do with the matter.

For a short time it seemed as though the peasants would triumph. Some of the nobles, with finer instincts and a deeper insight into the real grievances, made terms with them. Philip of Hesse settled his trouble in this way, and then went to the help of his brother Princes with his trained fighting men. The combined forces met a large body of the insurgents at Frankenhausen, and attempted negotiations. The peasants would have laid down their arms had not Münzer appeared on the scene with reinforcements and with the magnetic power of making them believe that they were invulnerable. They went with songs into battle, to fall in their thousands on the field.

Their cause was lost, their hopes defeated. Münzer was caught and killed, Carlstadt escaped. The Princes in their power broke the Peasants' Rising, and some hundred thousand of the rebels perished. And for those who returned to their homes the yoke was harder, the burden heavier, than before.

Luther had saved the Reformation, so many historians think, by allying it with the nobility and with the prosperous middle class. Politically, doubtless, he was wise. With their support it grew and prospered. But it would have been a greater movement, and he would have been a greater man,

if he had been able to hold the balance between the powerful and the powerless, if he had felt for them in their ignorance a touch of that "infinite pity which alone is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life."

CHAPTER XII: *Catherine von Bora* (1523–25)

THOUGH Luther had now openly broken his vow of obedience, having severed his connexion with the monastery, he had kept the other two vows. He was a poor man, and he was a bachelor and of blameless life. But he fully believed in marriage and encouraged others who had been pledged as he was to find their mates. Until now (he was forty) he had been content with precept rather than example.

The noise made by the reform movement had been heard by many a cloistered monk and nun, and monasteries and nunneries were beginning to lose their inmates. As we shall see in the case of Erasmus, and in the case of Catherine von Bora, to the cloister were sent unwanted boys and girls, with the hope that, thus caught young, they might take their final vows, and thus save their parents and guardians any further anxiety. For such as these the life, at best, was an endless sequence of schooldays; at worst, it was a prison.

In the nunnery of Nimbschen Luther's doctrines were eagerly discussed, and the breath of freedom began to fan the spirits of the inmates. Twelve of them, bolder than the rest, determined to make their escape. As a first step, they wrote to their relatives to ask if they would be received home

again. The reply was in all cases discouraging, runaway nuns would not be welcomed. In their dilemma they wrote to Luther telling him that it was no longer possible for them to remain within convent walls. He set to work at once to secure their release, and enlisted in his service Leonard Koppe, who, on April 4, 1523, arrived outside the nunnery with a covered cart, loaded with empty beer-barrels. The nuns were waiting in one of the cells, and the story as told, and perhaps unconsciously elaborated, is that they climbed out of the window, and, having taken off their shoes to avoid being heard, crept across the courtyard. Koppe was there in readiness to help them over the convent wall, and each into her separate barrel. In this undignified fashion, concealed rather in the manner of Ali Baba's thieves, they rode to Wittenberg.

Luther at first lodged them in the old cloister, but friends soon offered hospitality, which he did not hesitate to ask for them. He wrote to Spalatin telling him of their arrival and that he was too poor to keep them. "If you can get something for them from the Court that will supply them with food and clothing—make haste I beg you. They are in great poverty and anxiety but very patient. I wonder indeed how they can be so brave and cheerful when they are in such distress."

They were certainly to be pitied, for they were

without dresses, since they could no longer wear the habit of their Order, and they could buy none, as they were penniless. For the most part they were young and of good birth, and it was not long before several of them had exchanged the cloister for a husband and a home.

One of them, Catherine von Bora, was a frank, outspoken German girl of four-and-twenty, with a high forehead, black eyes, and a fairly attractive appearance. She was eminently practical, and was a *Hausfrau* (housewife) wasted until she found her true vocation. She was bred in the cloister, and had few home recollections. Her mother died when she was a tiny child, her father, Hans von Bora, a nobleman, had married again. At five he dispatched her to school, and a year or two later to a convent where a relation was abbess, and where the child would also have the companionship of one of her aunts, who was a nun. As she grew up she was well educated, according to the fashion for girls at that time—reading and writing, Latin and the domestic arts, which included outdoor as well as indoor work. Her schooldays were fully occupied. It is little wonder that when she was sixteen, as ignorant of the outside world as she had been when she entered, and having no conception of what she was renouncing so fervently, she took the final vows. They were the same for a nun as for a monk—poverty, chastity, and obedience.

It suited her father, who did not want her at home; it suited her, as she was very attached to her aunt. To Catherine it was little more of a momentous step than confirmation is to an ordinary girl.

And so eight years passed, and now all was changed. Though we should count Wittenberg nowadays as little more than a large village, to her it meant social life, gaiety, friends, and freedom. Among these kindly people she hoped to find her mate. No longer would the convent bell rouse her in the cold hours of early morning ; no longer would the daily services weary her spirit ; no longer would she confess to girlish sins of thoughtlessness and petty irritation, and suffer penance. Whatever has been said to the contrary, the majority of nuns were good women of good instincts, and their faults were mainly those of people who lead too narrow a life and who get on each other's nerves.

Catherine's friends were anxious to see her married, for still the only solution to a woman's life was the cloister or the hearth. The former expedient having failed, the Rector of the university, who was attracted to her, was suggested to her as a husband. She openly confessed that he did not attract her and that her heart was set on the Reformer himself.

Luther's life up to this time had been too busy, too full of interests, for matrimony to enter into his scheme. Did he not live dangerously, under

the ban of the Empire ? How could he ask another to share his lot ? And yet, when told of Catherine's preference, his thoughts turned toward marriage. He had once said he would wed, if only on his death-bed, just to demonstrate his belief in that state.

No doubt in his boyhood he had dreamed dreams of a lovely princess : in his early manhood he had been greatly attracted by a beautiful woman, and later he had admired one of the other escaped nuns. Now, with the prudent common sense of early middle age, he turned to the homely, practical Catherine, for whom at first he had little liking, for he then thought she was proud of her birth. He had no wish to feel his wife's social inferior, but he need not have feared that. Neither of them was passionately in love with the other when they were betrothed, but there was strong mutual affection.

And so they were married ' very quietly,' as they say in the newspapers nowadays, on the evening of June 13, 1525. Only a few friends were present in the old cloister when the simple ceremony was performed, and the one-time monk and nun joined together in holy matrimony " in the name of the triune God."

Luther had purposely kept the ceremony secret until it was over. Immediately afterward he informed his friends, and asked them to a marriage-feast a fortnight later.

In his letter to his old comrade Amsdorf he says that he can hardly believe that he is a married man. In the note of invitation to Leonard Koppe he is in a merry mood as befits a bridegroom.

> Suddenly and unexpectedly [he says] God has taken me captive in the bonds of matrimony. . . . My Lord Catherine and I beg that you will send us as soon as possible at my charge a keg of the best Torga beer you can find, in order that my father and mother and good friends may be joyful at the feast. . . . It must be seasoned and cool that it may taste well. If it is not good I shall punish you by making you drink it all yourself. I hope that you and your Audi will not stay away, but will appear in merry mood.

The feast was a complete success, and abundance of good fare loaded the table, at which sat Luther's old parents, beaming with pride, their hearts' desire fulfilled.

The marriage did not pass without comment. Many of Luther's adherents were greatly distressed, among them Melanchthon, who was deeply hurt that his old friend had not consulted him in so serious a matter. Luther's manners, he thought, had changed for the worse since the advent of the nuns, and he regrets his lightness and frivolity.

To others the time seemed inopportune; the country was in the throes of the Peasants' War, and that able ruler, Frederick the Wise, had just passed to his account. And there were not wanting

Luther and Catherine

those who could not go the whole way with Luther in this matter, and felt that it was sacrilege for monk and nun to be bridegroom and bride.

Luther and Catherine, as we shall see, had chosen wisely, and were well suited to one another. He thanked God " for a pious and true wife on whom a husband's heart could rely," and he bade her thank God with equal gratitude for " a pious and loving husband."

Luther's example was followed by several of his disciples, among them Œcolampadius, of whose marriage Erasmus wrote : " Œcolampadius has just taken to himself a wife, a not unpleasing girl. He wants, I suppose, to afflict the flesh. Some call it a Lutheran tragedy. To me it seems a comedy : for tumults always end in marriages."

Protestants claim that in thus honouring marriage Luther uplifted home life and the status of women. He set the married life above the celibate one. Yet it must be remembered that the Roman Catholics, though they reversed this order, paid the deepest reverence to motherhood in their worship of the Virgin.

CHAPTER XIII: *Erasmus* (1466–1536)

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS shed the light of his brilliant intellect upon sixteenth-century Europe. It may be said that he was President of the Republic of Letters. His fame was not national but European. Scholars of all countries were members of this democracy, since Latin was the written and spoken language among them. What part did the cultured scholar, ever a student of men and movements, play in the Reformation?

A few words as to his early life will suffice. Readers of Charles Reade's famous romance *The Cloister and the Hearth* will remember that the hero and heroine, Gerard and Margaret, had a little son. "The yellow-haired laddie," wrote Reade, "Gerard Gerardson, belongs not to fiction but to History." But that is not the name by which he is known to us. We know him by the name which he chose for himself, 'Desiderius Erasmus,' which means, in Latin and in Greek, the desired, or beloved, one. The guardians of the little orphan boy were not faithful to their trust. His small inheritance melted away in their hands, and, in order to escape from the consequences of their action, they compelled him, much against his will, to become a monk. He entered St

Gregory's Augustinian Monastery at Steyn in the sixteenth year of his age. Ten years later he was ordained priest. Little though a monastic life may have appealed to him, it did, at least, give him opportunities for study which he would not have enjoyed in the busy world outside. He read diligently all the books that came his way, impelled by his keen intellect to gather knowledge. But his soul chafed at the narrow outlook of the cloister, and he aspired to a fuller intellectual life. The Bishop of Cambrai came to his aid, and, though it was not until some years later that the Pope absolved him from his vows, he had already ceased to be a monk in all but name. He became secretary to the Bishop, who later provided him with means to study at the University of Paris. Erasmus did not consider his income sufficient, and his earliest letters are full of appeals for help. He had a noble patroness on whose generosity he fully relied. His letters are, however, not cringing ; they are half piteous, half imperative. He knew he was a man of genius, and as such must look to others for support. At Paris he supplemented his income by taking pupils, among them Lord Mountjoy, who later became his friend and helper, and brought him to England in 1498 or 1499. He was treated with the greatest honour, received by Henry VII, and introduced to the first scholars of the day, to Thomas Linacre, the great physician, to Dean

Colet, the founder of St Paul's School, to Sir Thomas More, with whom he formed a friendship that was one of the solaces of his life.

More's was a singularly interesting personality. He had his dreams of a new world that would redress the balance of the old, and he wrote of them in *Utopia*, which described an ideal state where men and women were happy. The only belief required of them was in God and the immortality of the soul. Yet More himself was not incapable of bigotry. He laid his head on the scaffold for the sake of the old faith.

Erasmus fell in love with England. "England pleases me as no other land yet pleased me; the climate I find most agreeable and helpful, and I have come upon so much accurate and elegant scholarship, both Greek and Latin, that I hardly care now to go to Italy, except for the sake of seeing the country." But he was essentially a wandering scholar, and travelled largely on the Continent, making many friends.

He visited England again in 1509 when he was introduced to the young King—Henry VIII—and stayed with Sir Thomas More, in whose house at Chelsea he wrote *In Praise of Folly*, a biting satire on the monks. His personal experiences stood him in good stead, and he censured them and their foolishness with an easy, witty pen. Edition after edition of the book came from the printing press and it laid the foundation of a permanent quarrel

between him and the Dominicans. He performed lasting services to scholarship by his editions of the Christian Fathers and many other works, and most especially by his edition of the Greek version of the New Testament, which he was enabled to bring out mainly owing to the encouragement and monetary help of English scholars.

The ' New Learning,' as it is called, though the better name is Renaissance, meaning ' New Birth,' had no finer exponent than Erasmus, for unlike many of the Italian ' humanists,' as the leaders of the Renaissance were called, he was a man of fine character, moral and religious.

Erasmus, through his works, was a pioneer of the Reformation, and it was said that he " laid the egg which Luther hatched " ; to which he wittily replied that he had laid a hen's egg and Luther hatched a cock.

Three years after his edition of the New Testament came out he heard of the commotion over the Ninety-five Theses, and was interested and sympathetic. Luther had read *In Praise of Folly* and spoke enthusiastically of it, for " it belaboured the monks and clergy so manfully and so learnedly and had torn the veil off their obsolete rubbish." He hoped that the scholar would use his gifts in the conflict with Rome. But Erasmus was a champion neither by temperament nor inclination. His work in the world was to educate it. Still, he

wanted to see Luther treated fairly and heard in his own defence. The Elector Frederick sent for him to discuss what should be done when Luther had burnt the Papal Bull. Erasmus said that Luther had committed two crimes—he had touched the Pope in his crown and monks in their bellies. He knew that the Pope might find means to rid himself of this troublesome monk, and he fully expected Luther would be poisoned. He wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Mainz in which he paid tribute to Luther's blameless character. "What has he done?" he asked. "He has ruined the trade in indulgences, he has spoken ill of the mendicant friars, he has placed the Gospel above all books. What is heresy? Everything the monks do not like, including the knowledge of Greek."

Farther than this Erasmus could not go. In 1520 he wrote to the Pope, and definitely dissociated himself from Luther. "I supported him so far as I felt right, but I was the first to scent danger." And yet many of the Reformer's friends urged Erasmus to come forward openly as a champion of the new doctrine. When Luther disappeared after the Edict of Worms Erasmus was convinced that he had been killed, and so was Albert Dürer, who wrote to the humanist, "Give ear, thou knight-errant of Christ, ride on by the Lord's side: defend the truth, reach forth to the martyr's crown!"

At no time did the scholar show the slightest enthusiasm for the martyr's crown, and he could hardly be expected to aspire to it for the sake of a cause which he distrusted. He had no desire to break with the great traditions of the Catholic Church, and he was on good terms with the Pope.

With regard to dogma he held broad views, and saw no advantage in one creed being set up above another. So modern was he in his conception of religious toleration that he might have lived in our own day. He saw the greatness of the heroes of old who flourished before the Christian Era. Luther considered he overrated their virtues. "Even the most blameless of men," said the Reformer, "even Fabricius [the incorruptible Roman general] and Regulus [the Roman consul] were miles away from righteousness; but Paul and Augustine teach it." Erasmus held no narrow creed. "Unless I forgive my brother his sins against me, God will not forgive me my sins. Unless I have a pure heart, unless I put away envy, hate, pride, avarice, lust, I shall not see God. . . . True religion is peace, and we cannot have peace unless we leave the conscience unshackled on obscure points on which certainty is impossible. We hear of questions being referred to the next General Council; it would be far better to refer them to Doomsday. . . . Contention grows hot and charity grows cold."

What a contrast to Luther, who would have gone to his death for his dogma !

When Erasmus knew that Luther was in safe custody he wrote to Duke George of Saxony, and spoke generously of his services to religion. He had a good cause, and his disciples were to blame for the excesses rather than himself. " The Gospel light had to be rekindled."

Leo X died in 1521, and Adrian VI replaced him on the Papal throne. He urged Erasmus to declare against Luther by writing against him, and offered him hospitality at Rome and general favours. Erasmus was firm, however : he would not go. He was sore beset on both sides, for much had been expected of him. He sat on the fence as long as he could. The unhappy scholar wanted nothing so much as to be left alone to continue the business of his life. Luther made what proved to be a final bid for his favour in a letter written in 1524.

> I have remained silent long enough, dear Erasmus. I have waited month after month in the expectation that you, as being the greater man of the two, would be the first to renew our correspondence ; as you have not done so charity commands me to set you an example. I do not reproach you with having kept apart from us, knowing that your wish was not to embarrass the cause you were maintaining against our enemies, the Papists. My only vexation is that, in the books you have published, you have in several places, in order to conciliate or mitigate

their fury, dealt us sundry sharp side blows and cuts, which we had no reason to expect at your hands. . . . No one can deny that it is you who have contributed to the flourishing rise of letters we have witnessed, which gives so powerful an assistance to the right understanding of Scripture: the powers which God has granted to you in this respect are great, admirable, magnificent, and heartily do we thank Him for bestowing them on you. Informed by these feelings, I have never desired to see you step beyond the limits assigned you by Providence, and come over to our camp. You would render us great services there doubtless with your rare intellect, and your fine influence, but, since your heart falls short of the requisite degree of confidence, it is better for you to serve in your own way.

The actual break came at the time of the Peasants' Rising. Erasmus accused Luther of being partly responsible for that catastrophe.

We are now reaping the fruit of your spirit. You do not acknowledge the rebels, but they acknowledge you, and it is well known that many who boast of the name of the evangel have been instigated to this horrible revolt. It is true that you have attempted in your grim booklet against the peasants to allay this suspicion.

The Pope and the Catholics still urged and insisted that he should refute Luther with his brilliant pen. Very reluctantly he took it in hand and chose for his subject Free Will. Has man

power over his own destiny? Can he win Heaven and escape Hell, or has God predestined him from all time for the happiness of the one, the horror of the other? Had the great Potter shaped the vessel for honour or dishonour? If so God would be responsible for evil, and Cain would be as innocent in his murder as Judas in his betrayal—both alike forced to err. Erasmus held the Catholic doctrine that man has power to refuse the evil and choose the good; else would conscience be valueless and all moral effort unavailing.

To Luther there was no sin but unbelief. According to the motto of his theology, "A man is justified by faith." "You see how rich the Christian is," he wrote, "since, even should he desire it, he is unable to forfeit his salvation, no matter how many sins he may commit, unless indeed he refuses to believe. No sin but unbelief can bring him damnation." He even carried this dangerous doctrine to such an extreme that he once said, "Sin boldly, but believe boldly too." This is a terrible doctrine, for it makes all human effort toward right living vain, and the innocent child may be in a worse plight than the most hardened criminal, so far as the next world is concerned.

"Why does not God," Erasmus wisely asked, "remove the vice of our will, since our will is not in our power?"

Luther published the rejoinder in book form,

The Will not Free. Needless to say, neither convinced the other. From this time forward Luther speaks of Erasmus with hatred and contempt. Sometimes he is "a spider rejoicing over a captured fly," at other times "a viper trying to ensnare simple souls," "a serpent," "a bug," "a fox"; in fact, a whole Zoological Gardens of unpleasant animals.

At one time Luther was asked whether it was possible to pray for a thing without cursing the opposite. "No," was the bitter reply, "for when I pray, 'Hallowed be Thy name,' I curse Erasmus and all who dishonour and blaspheme God."

At another time he spoke with even greater venom. "This do I leave behind in my will and testament, whereunto I call you for witnesses. I hold Erasmus for Christ's bitter enemy. . . . He wrote a book against me concerning free will: but my doctrine he hath not as yet confuted, neither shall he ever be able to do so: for I am certain and sure that what I wrote concerning that particular subject is the unchangeable truth of God. But if God liveth in Heaven then Erasmus one day shall know and feel what he hath done. . . . He is an enemy to true religion, a particular adversary of Christ."

Small wonder that Erasmus, who might have used the words which Kingsley puts into the mouth of one of his characters in *Alton Locke*, "For my

part I have learned that the only thing to regenerate the world is not more of any system good or bad, but simply more of the spirit of God," denied Luther's claim to the possession of this spirit. " You descend," he wrote to him, " to calumny, abuse, and threats, and yet you wish to be esteemed free from guile, and led by the spirit of God, not by human passion."

But for Erasmus's intellectual activities and broad outlook, Luther would not have found the time ripe to challenge Roman supremacy. The sixteenth century had need of both of them, for both had their part to play in the reshaping of the world.

CHAPTER XIV: *The Protestants* (1522–29)

HAD the ban of the Empire been entirely forgotten? Was the finding of the Edict of Worms of no account? Luther had a charmed life. There was none to enforce the Edict, none to betray him. He was the head of a mighty movement; for a time Pope and Emperor left him alone. He lectured, preached, moved freely among his fellows, his home was open to all comers.

The reason for this immunity was that both Pope and Emperor had their hands full with other affairs. There was the constant menace of Turkish invasion. There were quarrels between the Emperor and the Pope and between the Emperor and the King of France. Then too there had been the awful anxiety of the Peasants' Revolt.

But the religious question was not dormant, and before the Peasants' Revolt a Diet was held at Nuremberg. It was quite ineffectual. The Princes were so annoyed at the Emperor's dilatoriness in paying promised pensions that they now declared that they would not be in a position to render further good service or to testify their love of the Emperor by undertaking expensive journeys to Diets. The Papal Legate was that same Cardinal Campeggio who was later to be sent on

a very delicate mission to England with regard to the divorce of the ill-starred Catherine of Aragon.

Campeggio was much struck by the attitude of Germany toward him as he journeyed to the meeting-place. At Augsburg he was openly mocked and sneered at by the people. At Nuremberg he was told that if he did not want to get into trouble with the populace he had better omit the sign of the cross altogether. In order to appear propitiatory, he did not wear the customary robes due to his state, but, with bare head and a red cloak over his shoulder, tried to indicate by his demeanour that he had come in a conciliatory spirit. He did not want, he said, "to deal out fire and sword," but to suggest fatherly ways in which the wandering Lutheran sheep might be induced to return to the Catholic fold. The members of the Diet made the somewhat vague promise that they would fulfil the Edict of Worms so far as they were able. All points of difference would be examined by a committee and reported on. This left matters much as they were. A Diet was to be held at Spires in 1526, two years later.

In the interval, when the tumult of the Peasants' War was at its height, as has already been said, Frederick the Wise passed to his account. Frederick had not been an open advocate of the Reformation, but Luther owed his life to the Elector's courage

and diplomacy. He has been called the "hearthstone of the Reformation," and the tribute Luther paid to him is not so exaggerated as panegyrics on powerful princes are wont to be, "When the genius of a financier, a statesman, and a hero concur in the same prince it is a gift of God."

He was succeeded by his son, John Frederick, who came forward openly on the side of the Reformation, and allied himself with Philip of Hesse. Unlike his father, with whom Luther's communications had all been by letter, and that usually through Spalatin, the new Elector became a personal friend of his indomitable subject.

The Diet held at Spires in 1526 was presided over by the Emperor's brother Ferdinand, who declared that it was the Emperor's wish that the Edict of Worms should be enforced. But this Diet was just as unsatisfactory, from the Catholic point of view, as the former one. The honours went to the Reformers. The Imperial cities strongly opposed the enforcement of the Edict. As a temporary measure it was decided to postpone the question to a future Diet. In the interval each state should act in matters of faith "as it should answer to God and the Emperor." Luther, who might have been expected to find this satisfactory in its vagueness, was enraged. "It is abominable that the Emperor and the Princes should deal openly in lies," he wrote. "It is laid

down that I should be dealt with according to the ban which was issued at Worms, and that the implications of this ban are to be rigorously carried out: and, nevertheless, side by side with this decree is the contradictory one, that only at a future Diet at Spires will it be decided what is good and what bad in my teaching. Thus I am at the same time condemned and remanded to a future tribunal; and the German people are at one and the same time to persecute me as a criminal, and wait till I am convicted. These Princes must be either drunk or mad."

The result was in one way satisfactory, for the reforming Princes began to organize the Church within their dominions. It must be remembered that there was as yet no regular service "appointed to be read in churches" as a substitute for the old Catholic missal and breviary. There must also be some organization by which the Church should be governed. How were the Evangelical congregations in Germany (Luther intensely disliked them being called after his name) to be ordered? It is as well to remember that to Luther it was no new Church; it was the old one purged of abuses. At the Diet of Augsburg a Confession was drawn up in which concessions were made by both the Catholics and the Reformers. Luther, for his part, said that he did not wish that the authority should be taken from the Bishops. "This one thing only

is required at their hands, that they should suffer the Gospel to be purely taught, and that they should relax a few observances that could not be held without sin."

If the Bishops had been compliant this might have been well, but for the most part, since their office would no longer hold so high a place, they were Catholics still, and intended to remain true to the old faith.

As a preliminary step it was necessary to find out the condition of the parishes. A commission was appointed to visit them, and a terrible state of affairs was disclosed. At some places the clergy were so ignorant they knew nothing but the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Often the people were utterly without teaching or training; all that the Reformation had meant to them was that they considered themselves free from irksome restraint, and they refrained from paying the tithes which formed the income of the clergy, who were many of them now living in insanitary, broken-down cottages, in the direst poverty.

Luther himself was one of the commission which examined the churches in the neighbourhood of Wittenberg. It was a most disheartening experience. Ignorance and indifference prevailed. The house must be set in order; endowments of convents and other Church property must be set apart for paying the clergy; those utterly unsuited for

their office, whether through age or ignorance, must be removed. The remainder must themselves be taught what they had to teach. On Luther's return he wrote the *Smaller Catechism*, which consisted of questions and answers giving in a simple form the dogmas of the new faith. Children were to be taught this by heart, though the method does not commend itself to modern teachers. First of all the youngsters had to be word-perfect in the answer, and then it was explained to them. This catechism did fill a real want; it was to be read daily, and Luther himself repeated it whenever he had time, to keep in mind the simple elements of the faith. He followed it up with the *Longer Catechism*, which was intended for grown-up people.

The services were to be held in German, hymns were to be sung by the congregation, and a sermon was to be preached. Luther wrote postils, or addresses, which were to be used when the clergyman was not sufficiently qualified to be original. He held his own views as to the qualifications and virtues required of a preacher. He must be clear in his teaching, eloquent, ready in wit, melodious in voice, and possess a good memory. Furthermore, he must know the doctrine, and also when to end his exposition of it. And, lastly, the minister must be a man of undaunted courage, willing to engage " body and blood, wealth and honour, for the sake

of his Gospel," for which he must also be ready to suffer himself to be "mocked and jeered at by every one."

Popular hymns, as we know them now, were non-existent then, and, in order to supply this deficiency, Luther brought out a thin booklet of twenty-four, to which he contributed eighteen, among them "*Ein' Feste Burg*," to which we shall refer in another chapter. He also wrote the tunes for many of them. One we sing to this day—to the hymn "O quickly come, dread Judge of all." The remarkable versatility of his gifts has never been better shown.

There is another and a darker side to this time of reorganization. In states which had accepted the Reformation monks and nuns were often ruthlessly expelled from their convents.

One case alone will suffice not only to show that great hardship was involved, but also that by no means all monasteries and nunneries were dissolute. Thus the nuns of the Convent of St Clara at Nuremberg petitioned to be allowed to remain there. They had a noble abbess in Charitas; in her letters of entreaty she emphasized the fact that they read the Bible daily. "By the grace of God we have no lack of Holy Evangels. I, however, set more store by following their precepts in life and carrying them out in works, than by having them always on our lips and not doing their

works." She failed to save her nunnery, though she resisted to the last.

When the Diet of Spires met in 1529 the tide of the movement was at the ebb. In the interval, 1526–29, the Emperor had triumphed over the Pope, Rome had been sacked, and the German troops had behaved with as great barbarity in Italy as they behaved in our time in Belgium. But in 1529 the Pope and the Emperor came to terms, and the Catholic influence at the Diet was so great that it insisted that no more reform should be tolerated.

When the verdict was known the reforming Princes banded themselves together and drew up a 'Protest.' From this time onward they and their followers came to be known as 'Protestants.'

CHAPTER XV: *Luther and Zwingli* (1529–31)

LUTHER was neither the first nor the only leader in the breach with the Catholic Church. He had forerunners; in England, John Wycliffe (1324–84), and in Bohemia, John Huss (1369–1415), and Jerome of Prague (1365–1416). From the death of Jerome till Luther's advent no great reformer arose. Then came Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), who hailed from Switzerland. He had not known the early struggles that had fallen to Luther's lot, and was a man of more equable temperament. He studied at Basle, Berne, and Vienna, and devoted himself especially to philosophy and theology. At the age of twenty-two he became a parish priest, and he turned his attention to the careful study of the Bible, learning St Paul's Epistles by heart in the original Greek. He was at the outset a loyal son of the Church, and accompanied the Papal forces that were attacking the French in Lombardy. He never had to suffer, as Luther did, the pangs of spiritual anguish, and his intellect was more akin to that of Erasmus, for he had a less purely ecclesiastical point of view. Born in democratic Switzerland, with its independent cantons, his political sympathies were with the people rather than their rulers. He might be called the fore-

runner of the Christian Socialists of our day. He first crossed Luther's path as an advocate of Carlstadt and the Anabaptists, but he was too able and well-balanced a man to be led to such extremes.

His religious views were broader than those of Luther. He did not so resolutely shut the door in the face of those who did not share his creed. Predestination made a slighter appeal. He held that God had more channels of grace than one and did not condemn many to perdition because of original sin. Heaven was not only open to all believers but to great moral teachers who uplifted humanity; Socrates had his place there with the rest. Luther could not accept such latitude. "A man is justified by faith," and, since the great philosopher was born before the Christian era, his doom was sealed.

The most important point of difference between Luther and Zwingli, however, was on the question of the sacrament. There were three opinions current at that time. The Catholic one is called the doctrine of transubstantiation. The bread and the wine of the Mass are, at the moment of consecration, by a divine miracle actually changed into the body and blood of Christ.

Zwingli's view was the direct opposite; according to him, the bread remained bread and the wine wine. The taking of the sacrament was a symbolic

act of faith in God and a service of commemoration of Christ's passion.

Luther inclined toward the Catholic view, but he modified it. He taught that, though the bread and wine did not actually change in substance, the body and blood of Christ, in some mystic way, were also present, as a sword is present in its sheath. Had not Christ said, on that last evening of His freedom, when He was supping with His disciples and passed them the bread, "Take eat; this is my body," and, handing the cup, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood." Luther's view is called the doctrine of consubstantiation. He declared, not unjustly, that to Zwingli the bread was no different from that bought in the baker's shop.

That most Protestant Prince, Philip of Hesse, was anxious that the Protestant German states should combine with the Swiss cantons, and he saw a menace to this in the split between the two Reformers. It was obvious that the less unity there was among them, the greater would be the power of the Catholic Church. He invited them, together with Œcolampadius, Melanchthon, and about fifty of his personal friends, to a conference at his castle at Marburg. Luther's reply to the invitation did not augur well for the success of the meeting:

> Your Grace can easily see that all conference will be in vain if both sides come with the determination

to give up nothing. All I have seen hitherto leads me to think that they will stand by their position even after they have rightly understood our reasons; as I know well I cannot yield when I have heard theirs, and I am certain they are wrong.

People rose early in the Middle Ages, and the conference opened at six in the morning on October 2, 1529. The scene was set in the old wainscoted banqueting hall, where, at a table in the centre of the room, sat the disputants. Before the proceedings began Luther was observed to chalk on the velvet cloth in front of him the words, "This is my body," and with this phrase he opened the discussion. Œcolampadius replied that they were only meant figuratively, just as when Christ said, "I am the door," "I am the true vine." Luther persistently repeated, "This is my body." Zwingli broke in brusquely, telling him that he did nothing but say the same thing over and over again.

The discussion grew extremely heated, for both lacked the courtesy of debate. The parties were striving not so much to convince each other, as to win the approval of the audience. Fortunately, a break for dinner came just in time to save further recriminations, and tempers, mellowed by the excellent fare, were much smoother when the disputation was resumed as follows:

Zwingli. Christ's body is in heaven. A body must occupy space, and it cannot be in two places at once.

Luther and Zwingli

Luther. God is above mathematics. Christ's body is in the sacrament as the sword is in the scabbard.

Zwingli. Christ spoke figuratively, as he did when he said "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

The discussion went on throughout the following day, and then it was quite evident to the onlookers that no settlement could be reached on this point. On all others agreement was possible, and the Twelve Articles of Marburg were drawn up, to all of which, except the twelfth, which referred to the Sacrament, the four reformers appended their signature. With tears in his eyes, Zwingli stretched out his hand to Luther, but he would not take it. "You have another spirit," he said. But before they left Marburg they had a day's social intercourse when they talked over much that they had in common and matters of general interest.

Luther went home in good spirits. "We left Marburg," he said, "with the hope that as they had conceded all the Christian articles, and had receded from their former error concerning the Holy Sacrament they would in time completely unite with us." This was a groundless hope.

Zwingli too claimed the victory, much to Luther's disgust. He could no more brook opposition than could the Pope.

They never united. Two years later war broke out between the Protestant and Catholic cantons of Switzerland. Zwingli led his co-religionists, bearing the banner of the canton of Zurich. He fell in the battle of Kappel which ensued, and Luther, looking on his death as a judgment and a warning, urged his followers to preserve peace. But he lamented his brother reformer, and for a moment modified the extreme rigidness of his dogma, for, though according to his tenets Zwingli was damned, he thought God might make a special exception in his favour.

CHAPTER XVI: *The Realm of the Birds* (1530)

IT was decided, in a vain hope that the religious question might reach a settlement, to hold a Diet at Augsburg in 1530.

Charles V, now at the height of his power, had long been out of Germany. Adrian VI had died, and had been succeeded by Clement VII, who had joined with the French King, Francis I, to form a 'Holy League' against Charles V. The Emperor retaliated in 1527 by sacking Rome, and making the Pope a prisoner for six months, much to Luther's delight; at the Battle of Pavia in 1525 the French forces had been defeated and Francis taken prisoner. Charles was now free to attend to the religious differences in Germany.

The Diet was originally fixed for April, but the Emperor had lingered on his journey and did not arrive till June 15. On entering the city, with his brother Ferdinand on one side and Cardinal Campeggio on the other, he was met by the Princes. The following day he joined in the great Catholic festival of the Feast of Corpus Christi. The Host was carried by the Archbishop of Mainz, who was followed by the Emperor, clad in purple velvet, bare-headed, with a lighted taper in his hand. The Elector of Saxony alone of the Protestant Princes took part, bearing the Sword of State

before the Emperor. Great lords and princes and a concourse of people followed in his train.

The Emperor gave permission later in the day for a performance to be held which was an allegory of the growth of the Reformation. The first actor to appear came on the stage with a bundle of sticks straight and crooked; these he placed on the hearth and departed. On his back was inscribed Reuchlin.[1] Then followed a scholar, who walked to the hearth and tried to arrange the faggots symmetrically, but failed and withdrew, with a gesture of impatience. He impersonated Erasmus. In his successor, an actor in monk's garb who set fire to the faggots and made a royal blaze, Luther was easily recognized. An Emperor (Charles V) followed, and tried vainly to beat out the flames with his sword. And lastly came the Pope (Leo X), who, in the hope of quenching the flames, threw a bucket of oil on the fire, so that it blazed fiercely.

Where was the real Luther while he was being thus impersonated before the Emperor? Much to his disappointment, and, curiously enough, to his surprise, since he was still under the ban of the Empire, he was not allowed to come to Augsburg and conduct the Protestant case in person. The Elector had arranged that he should stay at the

[1] Reuchlin (1455–1522) was a German humanist, who devoted himself to the study of Hebrew, the knowledge of which he used to criticize the Vulgate translation of the Old Testament.

Castle of Coburg on the borders of Thuringia. It was a magnificent fortress, built on a hill, standing high above the surrounding city, a landmark for the country round. He had assigned to him the principal part of the building, known as the Prince's Tower. As companions he had his devoted nephew and secretary, Veit Dietrich and Cyriac Kaufmann, and had besides in his train a retinue of thirty of the Elector's men. He soon settled down, and his nephew wrote of him at this time :

> The remarkable firmness, cheerfulness, faith, and hope of the man I cannot sufficiently admire. These he nourishes by diligent meditation on God's word. Not a day passes but that he does not devote three hours thereto, and those the hours most suitable to study and prayer.

He was well content. On April 22 he wrote a letter to Melanchthon who was to be his representative at Augsburg :

> I have at length arrived at my Sinai, dear Philip : but of this Sinai I will make a Sion : I will raise thereon three tabernacles, one to the Psalmist, another to the Prophets, and lastly one to Æsop. There is nothing here to prevent my solitude being complete. I reside in a vast abode which overlooks the castle. I have the keys of all its apartments. There are scarcely thirty persons within the fortress, of whom twelve are watchers by night, and two other sentinels, who are constantly posted on the castle height.

As at the Wartburg, he dressed as an ordinary civilian and allowed his beard to grow. He went for long rambles in the surrounding country, but for the most part his time was spent in work. He had chosen for his study a little room, still to be seen, with a window that looked out to the open country. Perhaps it was because he had at this time the intention of translating Æsop that he was especially observant of the birds. He saw in their life in the trees a similitude to the life around him. As his poetic fancy took him he called this temporary home "The Realm of the Birds," "The Wilderness," and many other charming names. Some of his most beautiful letters were written at this time of retreat. Here is an extract from one to his friends at Wittenberg :

> There is a grove just under our window like a small forest. There the jackdaws and crows are holding a Diet. They fare in and out, and keep up a racket day and night without ceasing, as if they were all drunk. Young and old chatter together in such a fashion that I wonder they have any voice left. I should like to know whether there are any such knights and warriors still left with you. It seems as if they must have gathered from all the world. I have not yet seen their emperor ; but the nobility and gentry constantly flit and gad about before our eyes, not extravagantly clothed, but in one colour, and all alike grey-eyed. They all sing the same song. . . . They care nothing for palaces, their hall is vaulted with the broad vault of Heaven, and its

walls are as wide as the world. They do not ask for horses or armour, they have feathered chariots to escape the hunters. They are high and mighty lords, but I don't yet know what they are debating. So far as I have been able to understand, they plan a great war against wheat, barley, oats, malt, and all sorts of grain. Many a one will show himself a hero and do brave deeds.

In an even more charming letter he writes :

My residence is now in the clouds, in the empire of the birds. Not to mention the infinity of other birds whose songs and chatterings and confused cries would deafen the voice of the tempest, there is near me a wood, completely peopled, every branch of every tree of it, with rooks and crows. From morning till night, nay, sometimes from night till morning, there is a clamour so incessant, so indefatigable, as to make me fully convinced that in no other spot in the world are there so many birds assembled together as there are here. They are not quiet for an instant ; old and young, parents and children, are eternally cawing away to the praise and honour of crows. Perhaps by their so-harmonious voices they charitably intend to bring sleep gently to my eyelids. Pray God I may find such to be the case to-night. 'Tis a noble race of birds, and, as thou knowest, very useful in the world. As I look at them I seem to have before me the whole army of learned scholars assembled together from all parts of the world, for the purpose of giving me a better idea of their wisdom and their pleasant language, and to let me see at my leisure what they are and what they can do for the world of spirit and for the

world of flesh. We have not as yet heard the nightingale, though the cuckoo, who announces and accompanies the more agreeable notes of Philomela, has for some time past been glorifying himself in the woods around me.

At times, in spite of these happy letters, he grew very depressed. He was greatly cheered when his wife sent a portrait of his little daughter Magdelena, painted by Lucas Cranach. She had chosen wisely, for this little maiden was always his best-loved child. He hung up her portrait where he could see it as he sat at his work, and it brought yearning thoughts of home.

He suffered too at times from ill-health, and occasionally the twittering of the birds was more than he could stand, for he had, he said, " a buzzing in the ears just as though some wind were tearing through my head. The devil has something to do with it."

His belief in evil spirits was fully shown in the story of the phantom monks of Spires. He was told that a party of monks had arrived at that town, saying they had come from Cologne, and that they wished to be ferried across the Rhine, in order to attend the Diet at Augsburg. They were duly taken as passengers, and landed on the opposite bank, when they vanished into thin air, thus proving, so he thought, that they were fiends !

Luther's preoccupation was naturally with affairs at Augsburg. Was Melanchthon bold and resolute or was he willing to yield too much? He was of a different character and temperament from Luther, and thought compromise possible.

The Diet was opened on June 20, presided over by the Emperor in person, with his brother Ferdinand, Campeggio the Papal Legate, the Electoral Princes, and the representatives of the free towns in attendance.

Melanchthon, in correspondence with Luther, and in conference with other leaders, had drawn up what was called the Confession of Augsburg. It was read to the Emperor and the assembled Princes and deputies in the chapel of the Bishop's palace. "It is a joyful circumstance," Luther wrote, "for me to have lived to this hour."

It was but a preliminary to the negotiations which went on for the next few months. Melanchthon was willing to yield, as we have said, as much as he could. Luther was uncompromising. Melanchthon wrote miserably anxious letters to him. To one he replied:

> To-day your last news has reached me, in which you advise me of your labours, your dangers, your tears, as if I were ignorant of these things, or sat on a bed of roses, and bore no part in your cares. Would to God my cause were such as admitted of tears!

In another letter he begs the still despondent Philip not to wear himself out with anxiety, for the cause is in God's hands. He had faith, and he thought Melanchthon lacked it. In a letter to Chancellor Brück at this time he said :

> I was lately looking out of my window when I beheld two wonderful sights. First I saw the stars and God's fair bright firmament, but nowhere any pillars on which the Master Builder had poised this lofty frame ; yet the heavens did not fall in, and the firmament stood quite fast. But there are some who search for such pillars and would anxiously grasp and feel them, and, because they cannot do this, fear and tremble lest the heavens should fall. The other spectacle I saw was a great, dense cloud floating over us, so charged and burdened that it might be likened to a mighty sea, though I could perceive no coffer in which it was enclosed ; and yet it fell not, but, greeting us with a black frown, passed on.

The Augsburg Confession was humble in its tone, an apology rather than a creed. In the first part it stated the faith that was common to Catholic and Protestant ; in the second it gave the authority of the Bible and early Fathers of the Church for the rejection of certain doctrines and abuses which had been attacked.

On August 3 the Catholic answer was forthcoming. With all Melanchthon's concessions, the Confession of Augsburg was unacceptable. The Protestants were required to accept the Catholic

faith without compromise. To Philip of Hesse this was equivalent to a declaration of war. Three days later, secretly, without the permission of the Emperor, he left Augsburg.

But the negotiations dragged on, Melanchthon still hopeful of an agreement. Luther, knowing that such a thing was now impossible, declared, "Not one hair's breadth will I yield." And, recognizing the fact that strife might be the inevitable consequence, he said: "If war is to come let it come. God has delivered them up to be slaughtered."

On September 23 the Diet decided that the Confession had been refuted, and that the Protestants must renounce their faith.

The Imperial Edict known as the Recess of Augsburg was published on November 19. It gave the Evangelicals six months in which to recant and rejoin the Catholic fold.

We must say a few words further of Luther's life at Coburg. At this time he had the misfortune to lose his father, "that good old man." His grief was the best tribute from such a son. His secretary told how he took his psalter, and shut himself up in his room for two days to master his sorrow. Of Hans Luther Melanchthon said, "He was greatly beloved of all good men."

It was in this time of retirement that Luther is said to have written his celebrated hymn, "*Ein'*

feste Burg ist unser Gott," of which we have already spoken. It has been called the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation." We give it in Thomas Carlyle's translation (1831).

A safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He'll help us clear from all the ill
That hath us now o'ertaken.
The ancient Prince of Hell
Hath risen with purpose fell;
Strong mail of Craft and Power
He weareth in this hour,
On Earth is not his fellow.

With force of arms we nothing can,
Full soon were we down-ridden;
But for us fights the proper Man,
Whom God Himself hath bidden.
Ask ye, Who is this same?
Christ Jesus is His name,
The Lord Zeboath's Son,
He and no other one
Shall conquer in the battle.

And were this world all Devils o'er,
And watching to devour us,
We lay it not to heart so sore:
Nor can they overpower us.
And let the Prince of Ill
Look grim as e'er he will,
He harms us not a whit:
For why? His doom is writ,
A word shall quickly slay him.

God's Word, for all their craft and force
One moment will not linger,
But spite of Hell, shall have its course;
'Tis written by His finger.

And tho' they take our life,
Goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small ;
These things shall vanish all,
The City of God remaineth.

CHAPTER XVII: *Home Life*

LUTHER'S life was spent so much in the public gaze that it gives one a strong sense of contrast to see him in the intimacy of the home. There was no doubt that his marriage was an unqualified success. For the first time in his manhood he knew what it was to be well cared for. He had suffered every sort of discomfort. That he was badly looked after may be judged from the fact that for a whole year his bed was not made. He came in so exhausted at night that he would do no more than lie on it as he had risen from it.

Luther and Catherine—"Kathe," as he called her—started housekeeping in the dwelling in which he had lived so long, the Black Monastery, given to them by the Elector. They had small means to start with—two hundred florins a year, which would amount to £160 in our money. But the custom of those days was to give lavish presents in kind; wine and beer and venison, besides silver goblets and other gifts, were presented freely to them.

We catch a glimpse of their early married days in the story told of how Kathe would sit by her husband's side on the window-seat when he was working, and ask him foolish questions, and he would laugh at her.

These were her moments of dalliance, but she was essentially a practical woman with a genius for domestic affairs, a power of organization and of hard work which is astounding.

She needed to be a good manager, for Luther throughout his life was indifferent to money and splendidly generous. He wanted to help his friends, and if his own purse were empty he would plead their cause with his wealthier acquaintances. The poor found him ever ready to supply their needs, beggars to give them alms. But in the case of the latter Kathe put her foot down, and proved to him that many of them were rogues, whereupon he wrote a characteristic diatribe against them. His unworldliness in financial affairs was but an additional problem for his resourceful wife. She never could be sure when one of their silver goblets might be missing from the shelf, because some appeal could not otherwise be met, or some present given, and in moments of exasperation she would hide a cherished possession. Poverty knocked at the door pretty often in the early days at the monastery, and at times debt pressed heavily upon them. In one letter to a friend Luther says: "You ask me for eight florins. Where on earth am I to get eight florins? As you know, I am compelled to live with the strictest economy, and yet my want of means, perhaps my want of care, has compelled me to contract, during

the past year, debts amounting to more than a hundred florins." In spite of this, he boasted that, though poor, he had more pleasure in what was given him for his needs than the rich had in their great possessions. So little grasping was he that once, when the Elector sent him a present of fine cloth, he wrote him a charming letter in which he begged him not to overdo his gifts, since there were so many other claims on his generosity. In spite of his poverty, he did not hesitate to entertain a great deal, and there was always good and abundant fare at his board.

He never would take a penny for any of his books, though the publishers who did so well by them would have been quite willing to pay him. It was in vain that the practical Catherine urged that a substantial sum would be added to the household budget if he took only a small royalty on every copy sold.

It was a great joy to him when, on June 7, 1526, his first child, Hans, was born. With what gladness he wrote to his parents, who had so longed for him to have children! The year of the boy's birth was a very anxious one for the household. Luther fell seriously ill, and from this time onward was constantly troubled by fits of giddiness, heart attacks, and internal troubles. He sometimes alarmed the household by going off into a dead faint. That same year the dreaded plague reached

Wittenberg; the university was removed to Jena, and the Elector urged Luther to bring his wife and child to the comparative safety of that spot. He refused, alleging that it was the duty of the shepherd to remain with the sheep in their time of trouble. His inalienable faith in God was with him in all times of such visitations. "I and Bugenhagen alone remain here," he wrote in a time of trial, "but we are not alone, for Christ is with us, and will triumph in us and shelter us from Satan, as we hope and trust." He went freely among the stricken people. His friend Jonas's wife died in his arms. His house was the refuge of Bugenhagen, whose household had been visited by the scourge. The one-time monastery was a hospital. With all this anxiety came another. His little son lay apparently at the point of death, and for twelve days refused to eat anything. Then the cloud lightened, the child came slowly back to life, the plague passed over. At the end of this sad year his little daughter Elizabeth was born, but only for a few months were her infant smiles to gladden their hearts. Luther yearned over her as she lay dead. "'Tis wonderful how sick at heart her loss has made me. I feel like a woman, so great is my agitation. I could never believe that a man's soul could be filled with such tenderness."

He had Wordsworth's exquisite belief that

"Heaven lies about us in our infancy" when he said: "The loving children do live innocently, they are without malice, wrath, covetousness, and unbelief. Therefore they are merry and possess a conscience; they fear no danger, whether wars, pestilence, or death. They will take an apple rather than a crown: what they hear concerning Christ and the life to come, the same do they believe simply and plainly and prattle joyfully thereof."

Other children were born—Magdalena in 1529, Martin in 1531, Paul in 1533, and Margaret in 1534.

The household was a large one, for, besides the babies as they came, Kathe's aunt, Lene, who had also left the convent, two orphan nieces, the daughters of Luther's sister, and a grand-niece, and, at times, other relations lived with them.

The father's relationship with his children was a very happy one. He had not forgotten his own harsh, unhappy childhood, and his little ones gathered up happy memories of him.

The smallest bairn was always the darling of his heart for the time being. When Hans and Magdalena could walk and talk their fascinations were put in the shade by Martin's. He wrote that he thought the youngest child was always particularly precious, and he called him his "dearest

treasure." "I am sufficiently contented, for I have three noble children, which no Papist theologian has, and the three children are as three kingdoms which belong to me by inheritance more surely than Ferdinand's Hungary, Bohemia, and the Romish kingdom."

Luther's letters had a simplicity and charm all their own. In one which he wrote to his little son Hans when he was four years old there is a touch of fairyland:

> Grace and peace in Christ, my dear little boy. I am pleased to see that thou learnest thy lessons well. Go on thus, my little son, and when I come home I will bring thee a fine fairing. I know of a pretty garden, where are merry children that have gold frocks, and gather nice apples and plums and cherries under the trees, and sing and dance, and ride on pretty horses with gold bridles and silver saddles. I asked the man of the place whose the garden was and whose the children were. He said, "These were the children who play, and learn, and are good." Then I answered, "I also have a son, who is called Hans Luther. May he come to this garden, and eat pears, and apples, and ride a little horse, and play with the others?" The man said, "If he says his prayers and learns and is good, he may come: and Lippus and Jost may come [Melanchthon's son Philip and Jonas's son Jodocus], and they shall have pipes, and drums, and lutes, and fiddles, and they shall dance and shoot with little cross-bows." Then he showed me a smooth lawn in the garden laid out for dancing, and there the pipes and drums and cross-

bows hung. But it was still early and the children had not dined: and I could not wait for the dance. So I said, "Dear sir, I will go straight home and write all this to my little boy: but he has an Aunt Lene that he must bring with him." And the man answered, "So it shall be: go and write as you say." Therefore, dear little boy, learn and pray with a good heart, and tell Lippus and Jost to do the same, and then you will all come to the garden together. Almighty God guard you. Give my love to Aunt Lene, and give her a kiss for me.

YOUR LOVING FATHER

One day he fell talking to Kathe of the terrible sacrifice God had asked of Abraham in giving up his only son. A dialogue took place between them as follows:

Luther. I would have disputed with God.

Kathe. I cannot believe that God really wanted anyone to kill his only child.

Luther. God must be kinder to us, and speak more gently to us. Neither Kathe nor I would pluck the eye out, nor knock the head off our child, and neither will God. He gave His only Son to make us trust Him.

Directly the children were old enough the father began to teach them simple religious lessons. He held a short service with his household every morning, reciting the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and the Catechism with the children.

He had a busy day in front of him, and his industry was stupendous. The simple service and breakfast over, he spent the morning lecturing to his students. At midday came a hearty German dinner, and Luther, though he could be very abstemious, was a good trencherman and liked a good drink. He loved high spirits and cheerful faces, and found drink no mean aid in driving dull care away. He considered drink a great help in chasing away evil thoughts suggested by the devil. "What other cause do you think I have for drinking so much strong liquor, but that I wish to mock and harass the devil?" He followed the fashion of his time in thinking lightly of drunkenness, but he kept himself within bounds.

The afternoon he would spend attending to his enormous correspondence, and writing his books and articles. After a strenuous day he would relax and enjoy the pleasant evening meal, when the family sat round the supper-table. Occasionally he worked again till he went to bed; at other times he would play a game with his friends, or chat or listen—and this was the greatest delight of all—to music and song.

Though he still suffered from depression, and perhaps because he did, he had as great a belief in the duty of 'cultivating happiness' as our own Stevenson, who once wrote:

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness; . . .
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take,
And stab my spirit broad awake.

In a letter to Prince Joachim, who was a prey to melancholy thoughts, he said:

> Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be of good cheer. . . . Joy and good humour in honour and seemliness is the best medicine for a young man, yea, for all men. I, who have hitherto spent my life in mourning and sadness, now seek and accept joy wherever I can find it.

Husband and wife, as we have said, were well suited to one another. Luther occasionally, perhaps when Kathe had been unusually persistent, said very uncomplimentary things about women, and once he boasted of having boxed her ears because she annoyed him. At one time he asserted, "Woman's rule never did any good"; at another, probably because Kathe had been proffering too much advice: "Woman is half a child. Whoever has taken a wife must look upon himself as the guardian of a child." "If I were to marry again I would hew a wife out of stone—you cannot get an obedient wife otherwise."

In spite of this, Kathe had a great influence over him, and in his letters to her we see that he confided to her his difficulties, sure of her understanding and sympathy. Though she was generally popular, she held her head high as the

Reformer's wife, and some thought her too much of a manager. To incur her displeasure might mean estrangement from her husband. She hated her husband's enemies with a thoroughness which left nothing to be desired, but she did not always love his friends. She was masterful, and as a consequence her husband, in his letters to her, used to refer to her as "Lord Kathe," "Master," "Doctor," "Your Grace," "Lady of Dulsdorf," and "Lady of the Pig Market." At other times tenderness broke through and vanquished the humour, and he would write of her as his "well-beloved."

Few women have more truly merited the encomium on the virtuous woman in the closing chapter of Proverbs. It might have been written of Kathe that "she girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. . . . She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

Kathe may have taken this chapter to heart, but she was not great at reading the Bible or any other book; of literary taste she had none. In a letter to Jonas Luther says:

> My Lord Kathe greets you. She rides about, cultivates the fields, raises and buys cattle, brews beer and the like. At the same time she has begun to read the Bible, and I have promised her fifty florins if she finishes it before Easter.

We do not know whether she ever earned the reward. It may be not, with all she had to do and superintend. There were the children to see to, the constant going and coming of guests, the ordering of the household, the labours of the garden and farm. She planted fruit-trees, grew hops, kept pigs, and looked after the fish-pond, so that fresh fish could vary the fare.

What was even more amazing in this astonishingly industrious couple was that Luther himself found time to work in the garden. In a letter to Spalatin he wrote, " I have laid out a garden, and I have constructed a fountain and have succeeded excellently well in both undertakings." Not content with this, he wanted to learn turning, and wrote to ask his friend Link to lend him tools, for he thought that he and the devoted family servant Wolff might turn that trade to account. He also attempted clock-making. He mended his own clothes, since the tailors were so unskilful. Once in a hurry he cut a piece out of one of the children's suits to patch his garments, and was duly upbraided by his wife.

With all this energy and good management, as time went on the family prospered, and Luther was able to buy his wife a property at Zulsdorf which had once belonged to her brother.

Luther certainly spoke from experience when in discussing marriage he said : " There is no union,

no society, more beautiful to look upon, more gentle, more felicitous in itself, than a well-assorted marriage. It is perfectly delightful to see a well-assorted pair living together in peace and mutual love."

CHAPTER XVIII: *Table Talk*

THE human side of Luther has come down through the ages by way of his *Table Talk*. Round his own board, with friendly faces and eager listeners, the charming and lovable side of his personality was most in evidence. Here was no occasion for fierce invective or passionate anger, but only for thoughtful interchange of ideas.

Deeds are more important than words, but both count in the estimate, especially in so far as the latter find practical expression in the former. We have read of Luther's deeds, we have had a brief glance at his books, but we have not yet seen him in his intimate daily talk, when he expressed himself freely to his fellows. He was a Dr Johnson with many Boswells to record his sayings, and among those who took copious notes of his conversations were Melanchthon, Cruciger, and Bugenhagen.

We must not take all he said at the table as evidence for or against him. His best friends admitted, and regretted, that he was extremely coarse at times, even in an age which allowed far greater freedom of expression than our own. He was, this forgotten or forgiven, in other essentials a delightful comrade and a very human man.

Table Talk

The day's work was done, and round the table for the evening meal sat Luther and Kathe, such of their children as were old enough, members of the household, students, guests, and often strangers who had come from afar to see and hear this mighty man. It may be said that he discussed all things in Heaven above and in earth beneath, for the talk ranged over a wide variety of subjects—religion, philosophy, books, trivial daily incidents. His friends would sometimes set him going on a topic by asking questions, sometimes no such stimulus was needed, and the busy pens of his admirers could not work fast enough to take down all he said.

The *Table Talk* was translated into English by Captain Henry Bell in 1652, and republished in 1818 under the title of *The Familiar Discourses of Dr Martin Luther*. Bell gives an astonishing, and probably quite inaccurate, account of how a copy of the original work had been preserved. It was discovered by one Casparus van Sparr in the foundations of his old home. It had, in times of persecution, been buried by his grandfather in a deep, obscure hole, being wrapped up in a strong linen cloth, waxed all over with beeswax. He gave a copy to Captain Bell, who promised to translate it into English, and did so while suffering a term of imprisonment. We best get a taste of the quality of Luther's talk by studying a few quotations, taken from this curious English edition, which

seems, in the quaintness of some of its language to preserve the spirit of Luther's day. Here is what he said of virtue:

> The ancients have described four principal virtues: Moderation which preserveth the body, Justice which maintaineth the state and commonwealth, Courage, or manliness, which resisteth and defendeth, and Wisdom which governeth all.

He often brought home to his hearers, perhaps because of his children, the lesson he wished to convey by telling a story. Here is one on covetousness:

> A covetous farmer, well known at Erfurt, carried his corn to sell there in the market; but holding it at too dear a rate, no man would buy of him, nor give him his price; he being thereby moved to anger, said, "I will not sell it cheaper, but will rather carry it home again and give it to the mice." As he came home forthwith, an innumerable number of rats and mice flocked about his house and devoured up all his corn. And the next day following, going out to see his grounds, which were newly sown, he found that all the seed was eaten up, and no hurt at all done upon the grounds belonging to his neighbours; this certainly was a just punishment from God, and a token of His wrath against the unthankful world.

One day one of his guests told him of a strange case in law, and asked his opinion.

> A miller had an ass which ran out of his yard and came to the riverside where he went into a fisherman's boat that stood in the river and would drink

thereout. But as the boat was not tied fast by the fisher it swam away with the ass, insomuch that the miller lost his ass and the fisher his boat. The miller thereupon complained of the fisherman in that he neglected to tie his boat fast, and the fisherman accused the miller for not keeping his ass at home, and therefore desired satisfaction for his boat. Now it is a query what the law is. Took the ass the boat away or the boat the ass ? "

Whereupon I said, " These are called cases in law : they both were in error ; the fisherman in that he tied not fast his boat ; the miller in not keeping his ass at home."

At another time in speaking of the Bible, he said (probably after hours spent in his own grounds) :

" The Bible . . . is like a fair and spacious orchard, wherein all sorts of trees do grow, from which we may pluck divers kinds of fruits ; for in the Bible we have rich and precious comforts, learnings, admonitions, warnings, promises, and threatenings."

" What is the difference between the Bible and other books ? "

" The Holy Scripture . . . is full of divine gifts and virtues. The books of the Heathen taught nothing of Faith, Hope and Love, nay, they knew nothing at all of the same."

" What should we seek in the Holy Scripture ? "

" Well and rightly to learn to know Christ, for he is therein very friendly and familiarly pictured unto us."

Of other books and of writers especially he spoke as one of the craft.

And like as in company we use not daily the community of all good friends, but of a select few; even so likewise we ought to accustom ourselves to the best books and to make the same familiar unto us.

The multitude of books is much to be lamented: no measure or end is held to writing; everyone will write books, some out of ambition to purchase praise thereby, and to raise their names, others for the sake of lucre and gain. . . . I could wish all my books were buried nine ells deep in the ground, for evil example's sake, in that everyone will imitate one with writing many books, thereby to purchase praise.

He was saying of his own knowledge what he said of wealth, for he never coveted gifts or gold.

Where great wealth is, there are all manner of sins; for through wealth cometh pride; through pride, dissension; through dissension, wars; through wars, poverty, and through poverty, great distress and misery.

Wealth is the most insignificant thing in the world, the meanest gift in God's power to bestow on man. What is it compared with the Word of God? The Almighty usually gives riches to rude donkeys on whom he bestows nothing else.

It may have been a sly hit at Kathe, as well as a dig at the friars, when he spoke of women.

God in the beginning made but only one human creature (which was a wise council): afterwards he created also a woman, then came the mischief. The Friars followed God's first council, for

they live alone without marrying ; wherefore (according to their rule and judgments) it had been good, nay better, that God had remained by his first determination and council ; namely, that but one man only had lived.

CHAPTER XIX: *The Kingdom of Münster* (1530–37)

BEFORE the Edict was pronounced Luther had returned to Wittenberg. As we shall see, it was as powerless to check the Reformation as any previous pronouncement.

From this time onward, however, although Luther remained the central figure, he no longer took the initiative. The control of the movement passed into the hands of the Princes. This was bound to be the case, since it was about to change in character. War on its behalf had become possible and even probable.

Philip of Hesse, as already stated, had left Augsburg conscious that further negotiations were fruitless. The time was ripe in his judgment for a religious war, and it was well to be fully prepared, for "when the flowers began to bud" he meant to unsheathe his sword.

The Elector too had come round to this view, and Luther himself, who till now had deprecated the use of arms, was changing his mind. "War," he once said, "is one of the greatest plagues that can afflict humanity; it destroys religion, it destroys states, it destroys families, any scourge, in fact, is preferable to it." If the Emperor used force to re-establish the Catholic religion he could no longer be regarded "as

a true emperor, but rather as a breaker of the peace."

Luther wrote one of his most vigorous outbursts on the Diet of Augsburg.

> Who is there under the whole firmament who will henceforth fear us Germans, or expect anything honourable from us, when they hear that we suffer the accursed Pope with his masqueraders to treat us as monkeys, fools, children, yea, as logs and he-goats.

In order to see what forces could be arrayed on the Protestant side, a meeting took place at the small town of Schmalkalden, and a league was formed between the Protestant Princes and certain states. They pledged themselves then to support any of their number who were attacked by an enemy, particularly if the quarrel were religious. The alliance was originally for a term of six years. It was signed on March 29, 1531, and the signatories were six Princes, two Counts, and eleven imperial cities. The leaders of the League were the Elector of Saxony and Philip of Hesse.

But war was not to come yet, and when it ultimately broke out Luther was no more. Eighteen months after the League was formed the Emperor, having further trouble with the Turks, was obliged to agree to the Peace of Nuremberg (1532), in which the settlement of the Catholic and Protestant question was postponed until the calling of

a General Council. Luther was well pleased to accept this opportunity for peace.

In this interval the extreme party of the Protestants was again to break out in one of the most curious manifestations of fanaticism that the world has seen. It was a severe strain on the cause.

The Zwickau prophets had sown the seed, and a goodly crop of fanatics were to reap the harvest. To the ignorant, inflated with conceit, any form of religion which affords their peculiar holiness an opportunity of becoming conspicuous is alluring. To a draper of the name of Knipperdolling came a revelation. He had as associate a priest called Rottmann, who preached against infant baptism, and these two together got the town of Münster into their hands. Luther's remonstrances were unheeded. Rottmann openly proclaimed his antagonism to certain doctrines that Luther preached. The majority of 'saints' in the city were concerned in exterminating the Catholics, and a remarkable scene took place on January 28, 1534. The armed insurgents closed the gates of the town and placed sentinels there.

Two men garbed as prophets appeared in the market-place, and styled themselves Enoch and Elias. They were Bockhold and Matthiesen. Angels, they declared, had appeared to them in vision, bidding them do execution on Catholic and Lutheran alike. All adults who would not be re-

baptized were to be forced to receive the rite. Many resisted, and these unhappy creatures, on that bleak winter's morning, were driven from their homes and expelled from the town. By this time the prophets had the city well in their hands, and the people were in a state of religious ecstasy. Magistrates and officers were turned out of their posts, and their places taken by the prophets. Special revelations from on high occurred to Matthiesen from time to time, one worthy of his intellectual standing was to the effect that all books, save the Bible, must be burnt ; so the libraries of the town were ransacked, and their contents cast into the flames. A further revelation resulted in the spires of all the churches being pulled down. The Catholic Bishop of Münster at last decided to take action, and raised a force and laid siege to the city. In this extremity the prophets within its walls grew even more extreme in their views, and, discovering that polygamy was sanctioned in the Old Testament, immediately availed themselves of the licence involved. The town was reduced to great straits when, sixteen months later, it fell into the hands of the besiegers, and the Anabaptist leaders met terrible deaths at their hands.

Luther himself was relieved. In the interval he had been occupied by the visit of the Papal Legate, Vergerio, who came to interview him at Wittenberg. Luther did his best to impress the

Pope's emissary and to look as youthful as possible, this latter vanity due to the fact that he wished to convey the impression that he had plenty of time before him to continue the warfare against Rome. He created the desired impression when he breakfasted with Vergerio, who was so astonished at his appearance and gay attire that he took him for a man of forty. The legate tried to ascertain whether Luther would attend a General Council which the Pope wished to summon. The Reformer, as he himself confesses, was in his most disagreeable mood, and did not commit himself.

The Protestant Princes decided to discuss this question of a General Council in a congress held at Schmalkalden, and, in anticipation of this, Luther drew up the Schmalkaldic Articles to present to them.

Nothing was to come of the Congress, for, when Luther reached the town, he was taken so seriously ill that his life was despaired of. He had a bad attack of vertigo, and tried his own special *régime* —eating well and drinking much wine. But he grew rapidly worse and longed to die. To Spalatin in this time of trial, when he was suffering great pain, he wrote, " I have finished my journey, it only remains for the Lord to gather me to my fathers." His thoughts turned homeward, and he craved for the presence of his wife and children, " How I longed for my dear ones when I

lay ill. . . . I thought I should never see them any more."

His health improved sufficiently for him to be moved, for he resolved that he would not die at Schmalkalden and so gratify the Papal Legate, who was there. On the road home the illness took a sudden and, as he believed, miraculous turn for the better. A messenger hurried with the news to the town he had left, "Luther lives." He journeyed home by slow stages, still very weak, and reached Wittenberg in March 1537.

CHAPTER XX: *Closing Years* (1537–46)

ON his return he was still in very delicate health, and for six months was unable to preach in the parish church, but he gathered his own household together on Sundays for a private service. The depression of constant illness was upon him, and he found both the Church and his household lacking in religious fervour.

It was in this time of trial that he made what some consider the greatest mistake of his life. Philip of Hesse was married to an ailing, uncongenial wife, and sought Luther's opinion as to whether he could marry another. The young girl on whom he had set his choice was seventeen years old, and her mother refused consent to the union unless Luther and Melanchthon approved. To Luther, deeply imbued with Scripture, bigamy was not absolutely repellent, since the patriarchs in the Old Testament did not confine themselves to one wife. Philip brought pressure to bear upon him, and even hinted that, should the Reformer refuse permission, he would approach the Pope. Luther reluctantly yielded; the case was "of necessity," he argued. He made it a condition that the marriage should be kept secret, as he shrewdly suspected that other men married to unattractive wives would hasten to a new wedding. Unfortun-

ately for his reputation, the secret was not kept, and when Luther's action became known it was considered a great stain on his character.

In his public life he was under a cloud, and the sadness of bereavement shadowed his home life. He mourned for his mother, to whom he wrote a touching letter on her death-bed, telling her how they were all grieving, and how the little children wept. She had, however, passed in the fullness of her years. In his early married life an infant daughter had been taken from him. Now, thirteen years later, the grave was to open for another and dearer child, his loved Magdalena, a sweet, wistful girl, if we may judge from her portrait by Cranach. Very touching is the record of the closing scene of her life.

" I love her very much," said the father, standing over her bed, " but I submit to God's will. Magdalena, my darling, you would like both to stay here with your earthly father, and yet you want to go to your Father in Heaven ? "

" Yes, dear Father, as God wills."

" Dear daughter, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

He flung himself sobbing on the floor, and then, the outburst over, took her gently in his arms, and she died.

The epitaph on her tomb is here given in an English translation :

Here do I, Lena, Luther's daughter, rest,
Asleep in my small bed with all the Blest.
In sin and trespass was I born,
For ever was I thus forlorn;
But yet I live, and all is good—
Thou, Christ, redeem'st me with Thy blood.

The mother wept over her, but Luther bid her remember "She has made a good exchange. The flesh bleeds, but the spirit rejoices. Children do not dispute, they believe what we tell them. They pass away without regret and pain, without trials and temptations, and even death itself is as if they fell asleep." He took a last look at the frail young form. "You will shine as a star, yea, like the sun. . . . I have sent a saint to Heaven."

He felt that his own life was drawing to its close, and he made his will, leaving everything to his Kathe to administer, for he did not wish her to be dependent on her children. And so the little farm at Zulsdorf, his goblets, the jewellery, and any money that he had—a not inconsiderable sum—were to be in her keeping.

One day he spoke very solemnly, not of that end of his own life which was fast approaching, but of the end of the world which, in common with many of his contemporaries, he believed was not far distant. On August 6, 1545, he said: "I do believe that I am that great trumpet which prefaces and announces the coming of the Lord. Therefore, weak and failing as I may be, and small as may be

The Death of Luther's Daughter

the sound that I can make this world hear, my voice rings in the ears of the angels in Heaven, who will take up the strain after us and complete the solemn call."

At another time he spoke of how he believed that end would come. "Ah, loving God, come at once: I wait continually for that day, when early in the morning (in the spring the day and night are alike long) I see a very clear morning sky. For I think swiftly out of the morning redness will come a thick black cloud, out of which will issue three flashes of lightning, afterwards there will come a clap, and in a moment will overwhelm Heaven and earth. . . . I am of opinion, after or about Easter, when the year is at the finest and fairest, early at the rising of the sun, the element will be gloomy with earthquakes and thunderings about an hour or a little longer; then the secure people shall say, 'Look, thou fool, hast thou never heard it thunder?'"

The darkness was closing around him, but he rallied to the voice of duty. Two old friends, the Counts Gebhard and Albert of Mansfeld, had quarrelled, and in the hope that he might reconcile them Luther was asked to come and arbitrate. It was bitter weather for the suffering man as he journeyed to his old home at Eisleben and reached there on January 28, 1546. He preached in the town, and wrote letters to his wife, with a touch of

the old spirit of humour. But he did not allay her terrible anxiety :

> To the gracious lady Catherine Luther, who torments herself far too much. You alarm yourself as if God was not all-powerful and as if He could not make Doctor Martins by the dozen if the first should be drowned in the Saale or perish in any other manner. I have One That takes care of me better than you do, or any of the angels could do, One Who is seated at the right hand of God Almighty.

He wrote a week later telling her that he would shortly return home :

> The lords are agreed upon all points with the exception of one or two ; among others upon the reconciliation of the two brothers. I am to dine with them to-day, and I shall endeavour to make them truly brothers again. They have written against each other with great bitterness, and have not exchanged a word during the conferences. However, our young lords are very gay, going about in sledges with the ladies, with bells tinkling at their horses' heads, God has heard our prayers ! I send you some trout, a present from the Countess Albert.

This was the last letter he was ever to write. On February 17 he knew that his end was near. He was very weak when he reached his room ; his sons were with him, and friends gathered round to give what assistance was possible. " I was born at Eisleben, and here I think I shall remain," he said.

His last words were a fitting end to his career: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, Thou true God."

"Reverend Father, will you stand by Christ and the doctrine you have preached," he was asked.

"Yes." He gave a sigh and then, "Who hath believed my word shall never see death."

So he passed over.

They laid his body to rest in the Castle Church of Wittenberg, and there it still lies. When the time for retribution came, and a victorious Catholic army, headed by Charles V, entered the town, the Emperor, being urged to execute vengeance on the Reformer's body, replied, "I war not with the dead."

Epilogue

WE have followed Martin Luther from his birth at Eisleben to his death there sixty-three years later. What history was in the making in that period, and what a share he had in making it! He had the good fortune not to see the sword unsheathed and brother fight with brother in the Schmalkaldic War which broke out six months after his death. He had come to believe that only so could the question be settled, and questions can never be settled in that way. The centuries that followed have taught men and women the wisdom of tolerance.

His faults and virtues alike were those of a fearless man. He had, as we all have, the defects of his qualities. His coarseness was an exaggeration of his boldness, his hatred the expression of a passionate nature also strong to love, his narrowness—and such a fault is common, and perhaps inseparable from religious enthusiasm—was the expression of his absolute conviction that the truth he held was mighty and should prevail.

How has his character stood the test of time as the fires of controversy die down, and other problems absorb later generations?

Did he, as some assert, simply replace one creed by another, neither better nor worse? If this were all his service he would not have been a living force among his countrymen so long. He was a typical

figure of his age and epoch, and freed his country from the yoke of religious and political oppression by an alien state, so leading the way to the unity of Germany. Whatever may be the future of that country now that the great struggle of the European War is past, he helped to shape it to fine issues in his day, and his work is not entirely lost.

He has had his critics among his own people, and with very different judgments he has been judged. Goethe said that he "threw back the intellectual progress of mankind for centuries by calling in the passions of the multitude to decide on subjects that ought to have been left to the learned." That typical German of the nineteenth century Nietzsche contemptuously called the Reformation "the peasant revolt of the mind," considered Luther a destroyer rather than a builder, and finally summed him up by saying that his merit lay in possessing "the courage of his sensuality, in those days tactfully described as the 'freedom of the Gospel'!"

Our own Carlyle spoke more truly when he saw in him the Hero as Priest. Shelley, in his *Ode to Liberty*, said:

> Luther caught thy wakening glance;
> Like lightning, from this leaden lance
> Reflected, it dissolved the vision of the trance
> In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay.

As we take a final glance at the intrepid figure, we may say of him, as of all those who are willing to die for the faith that is in them, " Holy is the true light, and passing wonderful, lending radiance to them that endured in the heat of conflict, from Christ they inherit a home of unfading splendour, wherein they rejoice with gladness evermore."

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